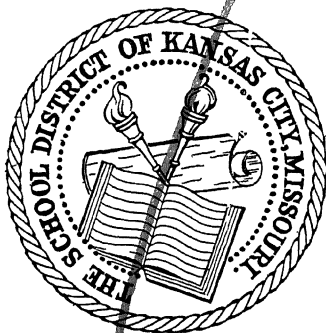


The Best Poems
of
1927

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THE BEST POEMS OF 1927

BOOKS BY L. A. G. STRONG
DUBLIN DAYS. Verse
THE LONELY ROAD. Verse
DOYLE'S ROCK. Short Stories
DIFFICULT LOVE. Verse

Editor of

THE BEST POEMS OF 1923
THE BEST POEMS OF 1924
THE BEST POEMS OF 1925
THE BEST POEMS OF 1926

THE BEST POEMS OF 1927

EDITED BY
L. A. G. STRONG



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The Editor of the *Forge*,
The Editor of the *Forum*,
The Editor of the *Golden Quill*,
The Editor of the *Guardian*,
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The Editor of the *Irish Statesman*,
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 The Editor of the *New Criterion*,
 The Editor of the *New Leader*,
 The Editor of the *New Republic*,
 The Editor of the *North American Review*,
 The Editor of *Palms*, (now published in Aberdeen, Washington)
 The Editor of *Poetry*,
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INTRODUCTION

THERE are so many points for discussion this year that I have been tempted to omit an introduction altogether. Any attempt to meet them properly would take pages and pages; and some of them, from their very nature, cannot be met at all. This does not mean that they are unanswerable, but that they are hardy annuals, the outcome of cherished misapprehension, which their holder will put in turn to poet after poet, undeterred by any number of replies. I will not therefore waste time in attempting to deal with those correspondents who ask me if poetry ought not surely to be Beautiful? and quote Keats (though they become restive if reminded that, when Keats said Beauty was Truth, he added that Truth was Beauty): who want to know why these modern poets write about such Ugly things? who complain if a poem is not intelligible at the first reading to their flabby after-dinner minds (with the radio on all the time): who tell me that Poetry should uplift the Mind to High Ideals: who criticise the book without observing its title, and complain of the omission of some poem written ten years ago: and so on, and so forth.

This sounds bad-tempered, but it really is not. The interest taken in poetry nowadays is good for those who take the interest, if not for poetry: and out of a dozen questions on the subject one must expect six or seven to be—shall we say—unsophisticated. The other five are worth while, even though, in the case of this book, at least three of them come from new readers, who have only seen the current issue. To save much tiresome repetition, correspondents are referred to the past issues in which some of their points are discussed:—

Principles of selection: 1923, 1925, 1926.

What are “Best” poems? 1925, 1926.

The place of intellect in poetry: 1925.

Discordant judgments on poetry: 1924.

What is poetry? 1926.

Poetic tendencies in our time: 1925.

There is one specific point I would like to talk about this year, and that is the so-called obscurity of much modern poetry. I do so with apologies to the poets, because I have no real right to speak on their side, being personally regarded as a conservative. Still, perhaps my very conservatism may be an advantage, for, if I can see their point of view, many others will do so who have no bias to counter.

First of all, the charge brought against such poetry. It is usually formulated after these lines:—

“I like poetry. I read Chaucer, Shakespeare,

Shelley, Keats. I can understand them. The great poets take pains to make their thoughts intelligible. But these modern chaps—I can't make out what they're at. They seem to try and make their stuff as obscure as they possibly can. Life is too short: I haven't the time for them. If that's modern poetry, give me a crossword puzzle."

That is a fair and temperate example of the charge. Some of it is quickly answered, but there is in it a point of real importance.

The answer to the first part, as Miss Edith Sitwell has so untiringly pointed out, is that the complainant understands the poets of past centuries (if and when he does understand them) because the community to which he belongs has had a hundred or more years in which to get used to their ideas and vocabulary: or, at any rate, a hundred years in which to accept thoughtlessly the repeated assertion of the few who cared, that So-and-So was a great poet. The contemporaries of these poets did not understand them, and raised the same objections to them as he is raising to the modernists today. This is demonstrably true, a matter of history: and the oft-quoted examples of Keats and Shelley brought forward by our disputant here turn against him sadly, for none were more vilified in their time than these two poets.

As for the great poets taking pains that the ordinary man shall understand them—one hardly knows how to begin answering this. It involves

a fundamental misunderstanding of all that poetry stands for. We will come to it again presently, and suggest for the moment to our objector that, if Keats and Shelley did not take sufficient pains to make themselves clear to their contemporaries, it is unlikely that they were looking down the centuries for him. In the realms of thought and language, the great poet is ahead of his time, as is a Galileo, a Newton, or a Lister. Material benefits are the soonest recognised, so that a Lister has not long to wait. Ideas which concern our practical lives, but cannot be appreciated without a test, take longer: Mr. Willett, whose Daylight Saving Scheme has been such a boon to the British city worker, died a joke. But, in the realm of abstract thought, of beauty, with which the lives of ninety per cent and more of us need never practically be concerned, how long may not a pioneer wait for understanding!

What nonsense the whole question is. How can a man, upon some hard-won peak of thought, some Mount of Transfiguration, edit his vision so that a stock-jobber may understand it? Struggling with the impossibility of finding any earthly symbol for what he sees, how is he, to recollect and allow for the mental limitations of Mr. William Briggs? This fallacy, that the poet has an audience in view when he writes, is the most persistent of all. We may understand what a poet has written, we may even look over his shoulder; but he is writing for

us only in the sense that his work is for those who can understand it. He solves his own problems: and the solutions are ours in so far as we share the problems.

This is not to say that the modern poets our objector cannot understand are Shelleys, or that obscurity is a merit. The fact that Mr. William Briggs cannot make head or tail of a poem does not make it a good poem, nor are those poems which he can appreciate necessarily bad. He and his likes have nothing to do with the case, one way or another. The trouble is that the obscurity which is the result of bad writing, the failure to express clearly a familiar and normal thing, gets confused with the obscurity which comes from the sheer unfamiliarity of the thought, the completeness of the vision, and the inadequacy of accepted syntax to record it. For—now we come to the real point—*a poem is not an arbitrary way of saying something which can be said just as well in any other way.* It is the only human way of saying something which must otherwise go unsaid. Much good poetry is uncomprehended and disliked by contemporary minds because they cannot paraphrase it. Familiar with five senses and a series of terms appropriate to them, with certain traditional associations of verb and its predicate, they cannot understand a speech which takes liberties with these properties, or which fashions new ones. And it is all one to them whether these innovations are wil-

ful, or the necessary effort of a new mind to speak a new thought.

I am afraid that the schoolteachers are much to blame for this. For some inexplicable reason, they value highly the exercise of making their pupils paraphrase poetry into prose. "Now, children," smiles the efficient and highly qualified lady, "I want you to write down, in your own words, just what Keats meant when he wrote that lovely 'Ode to a Grecian Urn.' " Or—this actually is from an examination paper:—"Give in your own words the thought expressed in Blake's 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright.' "

Apart from being simply silly, and encouraging that sort of facile dishonesty of mind which passes for quick wits, these practices do real harm by putting potential readers of poetry on the wrong track. They suggest to the plastic mind that poetry is a language, like French or Latin, to be translated into ordinary speech. Anything more destructive of real appreciation cannot be imagined. The resulting translation is not the poem; it is not any of the poem; it is not in any sense an equivalent of any part of the poem. It is nothing, in fact, but the artificially nourished effect of the poem upon an immature or ill-tempered mind. No poem can be paraphrased, nor can its content be stated in any other form. We cannot even say that any two poems have a common source, because no two experiences can ever be the same. Though the

same event befall A and B simultaneously and under identical conditions, their experiences must always differ: and the symbols with which, at the instant of perception, one man's intellect, intuition, character, history and environment clothe the thing he sees, cannot in our present state of development be transliterated into the language of another. The vocabulary of the genuine artist is a part of his vision. Neither vocabulary nor what we call "style" is a dressing borrowed from reason.

How does all this connect with the particular subject of Modern Poetry, and what means of approach does it offer? Will it in practice make the problem of understanding easier, or does it mean that we must fatalistically accept obscurity as such, and do nothing more about it?

The only answer to this seems thoroughly inconsistent with what has gone before: namely, to take a modernist poem and "explain" it. However, the reader must keep in mind one very important difference: the "explanation" should come *before* the poem, not after it. In other words, it does not explain the poem, but the mood and knowledge which the poem tries to express. I put the poem first, because otherwise no one would think it was obscure.

Here, then, is the poem. It is not good, because it fails to deal adequately with its inspiration: but an æsthetically indifferent example often illustrates

tendencies better than a good one. It will probably offend any stray modernist who sees it, on the grounds that it is not characteristic: but it will do, for want of a better. Its anonymous author endorses the account, if not the strictures.

*On An Elizabethan Farmhouse, Now Sunken Under
A Lake*

See the lost isle, whose state regresses
A fin below the tethered mile;
But for the lake her streams of guesswork
Hard with birds, and a half-hid smile

Lighting the lost porch where the fiddle answers
Dry soliciting by the fire.
That's danced, and the sweet sweat cancelled,
Where lips are liping with no desire.

Under her arms is none to kiss her,
A watered gleam where her breeders lay.
What state's this, cries Noah, is this our
Nightmare? and hobbles away.

First of all, "obscurity" apart, this is the work of an uncertain hand. It starts well, and, whether we dislike the jangle at the ends of the first and third lines, the device is repeated, and therefore deliberate. The fifth line is pleasant, but the seventh is weak and bombastic, and the eighth just incom-

petent. The ninth is ambiguous, the tenth a typical modern line: the final couplet fake, a reasoned effort to clinch the business: and "hobbles" is gratuitous. Moreover, the poet has a bad ear, very little technique, and several vicious tricks. All the same, the poem is interesting, and when I met it I filed it for a second reading.

Let us forget all this for a moment, and look at what the man wanted to tell himself—what was stinging him, as the French say—providing us with an excellent if undignified account of artistic creation.

"In the stately days of Elizabeth this farm was built. The mound on which it stood, when the waters rose, became first an island, and gradually receded nobly below the waters, deep down, where the few dim rays of light gleam on the fins of the fish; deep, deep down, as far as the taut, measured land mile under the loose waters. But for the lake the trees, whose bare branches now grope and guess their way in the gloom, would be dry and hard, covered with birds. The girl and her lover would exchange a secret smile in that drowned porch, where they rested from the dance, which the old careful fiddler was scraping from his dry creaky fiddle by the fire. Well, that dance is long over, and the fresh sweat cold; now only the fishes and the waters are lipping there, not the lover who roughly kissed her, kissing away the sweat from wherever he could reach. There is only a faint

filtered gleam of light in the room where her father and mother begot her. Old Noah might think that the flood had come once more to overwhelm the stately dwellings of man, and hobble away in terror."

If we now look back at the poem, the obscurity will be gone. We see that it often fails to express what it wants: but it is no longer obscure.

A great deal of modern verse is difficult: yet practice makes the reading easier, and much that yields little at the first attempt becomes so clear later on that one cannot realise where the difficulty lay. The example just given must not be taken as a plea for puzzle poetry, but a suggestion that obscurities disappear when we try to see what has been before the poet's eyes. The other day I showed a leading English poet and critic Mr. Hart Crane's "White Buildings." He could make nothing of it. Yet, Mr. Crane, a nervous, taut, set-teeth writer, is not very difficult when one realises that his compression is due to unusual logical relations of subject and attribute. His mental grammar is either very unsophisticated, or he has rather wonderfully rid himself of tradition. Look at his poem in this issue, bearing in mind, if you find it hard, that its logic works diagonally rather than straight, and that it gives up its meaning to reverie far better than to violence. Mr. Crane's work, the most interesting of the year, and in a logical sense

the most beautiful, reminds me of a mighty railway junction, with its cold lovely interplay of steel lines and signals; or of telephone wires with the light on them; any taut, organised, and nervous structure, always presupposing the quality of light. But this is none of my business, and I apologise to Mr. Crane for these unsolicited impressions.

I am always being asked, by lovers of poetry with limited purses, in which magazines the best is to be found. That is an awkward question. A glance at the contents list of this issue will give a partial answer: but one cannot go by it altogether, because a magazine which publishes a great many good poems may also publish a good many bad ones. "Poetry" will I think be found to head the list, as far as this issue goes. If a reader were limited to the choice of one poetry magazine, he could hardly do better: for the very hospitality and tolerance of all that has vitality, which makes one hesitate, academically, to call it the best thing of its kind, makes it all the more interesting reading. Miss Monroe is not afraid of printing a weak verse to encourage a young poet. Mr. Vinal's "Voices" is an excellent magazine which deserves the support of all lovers of good work and good workmanship: its format alone predisposes one in its favour. It is edited by a poet of fine and scrupulous accomplishment, whose reputation increases steadily each year. To come across one of Mr. Vinal's sonnets

in a wilderness of others is one of the things which make editing worth while.

Of the rest—and it must be remembered that there is naturally a difference between those which can afford to pay contributors and those which cannot—if I had to single out one, it should be “Palms.” This also is edited by a poet, and maintains an extraordinary vitality. Its level is high. Personally, as a reader, if not as an editor, I find it the most interesting of all: but that is perhaps because I prefer certain kinds of verse to others. It does not take the place of the ever-to-be-lamented “Fugitive,” but it comes nearer the spirit of it than any of the others.

So, if the reader with few dollars to spare wants the best outlay for his money in poetry magazines, he will be sure of getting good value with those three. This without prejudice to the many other excellent poetry magazines which reach me: they all have their merits, and by putting some first I would in no way depreciate the rest.

Of all-around magazines, I still think the New Republic keeps the highest standard in verse. The best British periodical for verse is the Irish Statesman, edited by A. E. Of the monthlies, the London Mercury has the most good things, but is very uneven.

This concludes the fifth year of this small anthology. I believe it has been useful, and hope it

may still prove so: but the measure of its usefulness must finally be its circulation. Nothing but a steadily increasing support can justify its existence, let alone the time and trouble given to it. This is neither a plea nor an advertisement, but a statement of fact.

The Appendix of poems commended is larger this year, and next year, if all is well, I hope to arrange it more systematically and list in it all the poems I have been glad to read.

May I repeat my annual plea for all material: i. e., all verse printed in any periodical between June 1st, 1927 and May 31st, 1928? Verse published in volume form ALONE is NOT eligible: and let me once again remind poets that while I am naturally delighted to receive their volumes, I must regard these as personal gifts, and cannot undertake to review them here or anywhere else. I hope this will not sound ungracious, or ungrateful: only I do not want to receive books under false pretences.

If, finally, readers find this book useful or pleasant reading, I would ask them to give it all the support they can, both personally and by asking for it at the libraries: for the contracted period of my editorship is over, and it will depend upon the support given to this volume whether, under the increasing pressure of other work, I can undertake a further period. Interesting though the reading is,

and delightful as are the contacts the book brings, its preparation requires a good deal of time: and only a belief that the work is useful to an increased circle of readers can justify a further undertaking.

L. A. G. S.

Summer Fields,
Oxford, England.

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THE BEST POEMS OF 1927

THE BEST POEMS OF 1927

ILLUSION

How many birds in cages die
Thinking a ceiling is the sky.

MADELEINE AARON.

SACRAMENT

SHE seemed a royal swan, though queenlier
Than all the royal swans that ever were.
Along each mast and spar, on every sail,
The starshine glimmered. By her forward rail
Her sailors stood. It was the end of day.
They watched the gold moon rise, the fish at play
Beneath her bows, the birds that flew beside.
The ship flashed bright. She curtseyed like a
bride.

She was home-bound, and all her men were gay;
Some sang and others talked about their pay.

"I'll dance at Mother Mitchell's." "I will buy
A di'mon' ring for my best gal." "Oh, aye!
I'll buy a fine new suit and stroll ashore—"

"For me, I'll not go sailing any more!"

"Two thousand mile, an' home! I heard the
mate."

Cling—clang—clang—cling— Her great iron bell
struck eight.

"All's well, sir!" cried the sailor on lookout.

"All right," the mate replied. One sailor swung
about.

As they walked forward from the poop thereafter,
With all their voices hushed, and hushed their
laughter,

An aged white veteran of the days of sailing,
Who'd been harpooner in Nantucket whaling—
The moon half hid behind a hazy mist—

"Mister," the old man said—his words were hissed,
His wrinkled eyes were grim, his shaggy brows
astir—

"Best lay your hand upon the main hatch, sir,
Under the mainsail's shadow." He took his way
Beside the mate, where the sail's shadow lay.
The mate laid hand upon the hatch; then turned
Cold with the thought of ships he'd heard of
burned.

"Mum's the good word now! See you keep it
still!"

"Aye, aye," the old man said, "Mum's the good
word. I will."

The mate strode aft and swiftly to the room
Where sat the master, unsuspecting doom.

"Sir, come on deck at once! There's much that's
wrong."

He whispered, beckoning. Forward a reckless song
Came in a burst from out the focsle door,
Where twenty sailors gossiped of the shore.

A gentle breeze the swaying ship caressed;
The yellow moon sailed gleaming toward the west.
Three solemn sailors, shadowing disaster,
They spoke together; mate, and man, and master.
"Batten her down. She is afire below.

Stretch every halyard. She has got to go!"

The master sat, a hand upon his chin,
With chart and pencil grimly figuring.

"Two thousand miles, and she's a shuddering oven!"
He stared along her decks. "Wake up, old sloven!"

Lift up your heels and, for God's sake, come on!"
The clipper seemed to tremble, like a swan.
Bells broke the hours out. The yellow moon
climbed higher.

The wavelets chattered round a ship on fire.
"Two thousand miles is all. If we keep wind,
she'll fly it.

Don't tell the men, sir. Best to keep it quiet!"
Her pinions tightly stretched, her every wing
Seemed tremulous to hear her sailors sing
And laugh at midnight; hauling tight her braces.
"The Old Man's putting her to her best paces.
Lord, ain't he got a sudden hurry now!
Look at her going; the old dipping scow!"
"My last ship, she was a fine clipper boys."
"The last ship's always best. Oh, stow your
noise!"

The jesting sailors, seated on her rails,
Gazed upward at the moonlight on her sails.
They whistled for more wind, sang carefree
snatches;
And no man chanced a hand upon her hatches.

When morning broke they went about their toil.
"Look at the wash beside her! Don't it boil?
I bet she logs sixteen. She's a quick ship.
It won't be long till she lies at her slip."
The mate sent them aloft, off the warm planks,
To work upon the masts, or lash new hanks

Where hanks were weak upon the straining stay-sails. No one stood

Upon her white-scoured decks of fire-warmed wood.
The master asked, "They guess what is the matter?"
"No, sir," the mate replied. "They laugh and chatter

Of port. They're too carefree to guess."

The ship flew on, a bride in a white dress,
Green water round her bubbling into blue,
And jokes upon the lips of all her crew.

"The Old Man's got a girl ashore as waits.
That's why he's putting her to fancy gaits."

Day passed, and eve returned. The stars flamed bright.

"I fear they'll find it out, sir, in the night."

At midnight, when the bell struck, a young man
Cried, "Touch that hatch, boys! See? You
can't— You can?

No, you can not. I knew you couldn't. See?

The Old Man knows it and he ain't told we.

The bloody ship's afire. All aflame. Below
She's bloody fire an' up aloft she's snow."

Some whistled; others swore. All hands stared aft
To see the master. The white-haired fellow
laughed,

"She's been afire a month as like as not.

A big fair wind is all the chance we've got."

They stood about. They clustered in a crowd.

And for a space no sailor spoke aloud.
The master saw them there. "They've guessed
what's wrong.

Fetch them all here, sir. Hurry them all along!"

"Men, she's afire below. I see you know it.

There isn't any help. She's got to go it!

What do you say, lads? Do you want to leave?"

A sailor wiped his brow upon his sleeve,

And looked up to him. He looked down to hear

Their answer. It was one high-ringing cheer!

"Leave her, sir? Why?" Came from the sailor's
lip.

"We ain't the sort, sir, what would leave a ship
'Acos she's burning. We will stay by you."

"Thank you, my lads! I knew I had a crew.

There is an island one day's sail away.

I will not hold you. You have but to say."

"We've said our say, sir. Where you goes suits
we."

He turned aside, lest any man should see

The salt pride in his eyes. A wisp of gray

Floated from off a hatch and blew away.

At midnight the wind fell. Clouds hid the moon.

The ship lay idle— "Wind'll come back soon,"

The chief mate said. "It better had," laughed
one,

"For if it don't, by God, we are undone!"

When morning came again smoke drifted white

About the ship and put the gulls to fright.

All day they threw sea water on the decks

And told of ships they'd known, and talked of wrecks.

"The girls ashore are waitin' you an' me.

Wot makes a man go followin' the sea?"

"I promised my best girl a di'mon' ring."

The younger men looked pale. "Come on, now, sing!

Stretch up those sails again," the mate growled slowly.

The ship's cook, an old fanatic, cried, "Holy, Holy, holy," out of his galley door. "Now, doctor, stow it!

The ship's afire, old son! I'd think that you might know it!"

"Repent ye sinners!" bawled the old sea cook,

"Hell's fires are waiting for ye!" Some one shook

A tarred fist in his face; then banged his door.

"Cut out your whining, you old wheezy boar!"

The chief mate laughed, the deck beneath him sizzling.

When evening came again a rain was drizzling.

The clipper smelt of damp, of steamy heat.

She was so hot they scarce could keep their feet.

The steward said, "The store room's full of smoke.

The lazarette's afire. It's past a joke."

"I ain't a jokin', Stooard," grinned a sailor,

"It stinks like blubber, fryin' on a whaler."

Doolan, the old man, told a tale of whaling,

In days gone by, out of Nantucket sailing.
Their quarters were abandoned; choking white
With fumes to suffocate them in the night.
Anigh the helm their blankets lay outspread
About her poop. Rain dripped from sails o'erhead.
"At sea a man's too cold, or else too hot,"
A sailor called. "That talk don't help a lot!"
Another answered, "How much do you pay
To buy a di'mon' ring? Wot did you say?
A fifty dollar bill? All right. I'll get it.
My gal'll give me beans if I forget it."

They slept, close huddled up. The wind blew cold.
The mate paced up and down. The doomed ship
rolled;

Her master in the chart-house. At the wheel
A haggard helmsman watched the mastheads reel.
The lower sails glowed ruddy. The mate said,
While hissing steam-clouds rose and blew ahead,
"If we don't take them sails off, fire'll get 'em,
And they're a lot too high for us to wet 'em.
Haul up the mainsail! Make the foresail fast!"
While shadowy figures climbed each shadowy mast
A voice called loud, "We'll soon see London town!"
The moon was hid. The misty rain came down.
A rope complained; somewhere a tackle creaked.
Along the railings, rat hordes fought and squeaked.
With trembling hands the pallid steward dished
Some fragments, from the smoking storeroom
fished,

Upon the chart-room table. "*Clear away the boat!*"

The master cried. Gruff from his bearded throat,
The words came choky. The boat swung free and
hung above the water.

"Old Shenandoah— Oh, I love your daughter,"
Sang Chips, the carpenter. "Ah, stow it, Chips!
All women's names is out of place on ships!"

The old Chips laughed. The crew stood round
again.

The squalls came harder. It had ceased to rain.
"Hoorah! Hoorah!" They shook away their
doubt.

"By God, we'll save her yet!" A wheezy shout
Replied from forward, on the focsle head,
Of, "Holy, holy, holy!" Doolan the whaler said,
"The cook's that mad he'll jump off of her
side."

"The Lord is holy, and the church His bride!"
Shouted the ship's cook, his long whiskers flowing,
While from the south the hard wind-puffs came
blowing.

Her lower canvas furled, her topsails towered
above,

She looked a running maid a man might love.

A maid in snowy skirts, she danced erect;

A princess for a royal groom bedecked.

"Come on! Come on! Lift up those heels, old
sloven!

Dear God," her master said, "She's like an oven!"

The wind came wilder. Crested billows ran
Swift by the flying ship, the slave of man.
The night grew darker. Round her a dull glow
Made sea crests glisten like war's bloody snow.
Black rollers moaned beside, like beasts in pain;
Like endless bison on an endless plain.
The squalls smote, bellowing. Her skysails ripped.
Chips slapped his thigh and cried, "The old girl's
hipped!"

They gathered by her wheel. The helmsman stared
Ahead where flickery 'fire tongues lapped and
glared.

"The moon's blow'd out," said one. Ribbons of
sail

Blew from the skysail yards along the gale.

*"The moon's blow'd out, but we don't lack for
light!"*

Far forward, the mad sea cook yelled delight.

"Too late! Too late! Ye damned, ye damned!
Ye're burning—

Ye're doomed to hell, and there'll be no returning!"

"Fetch that man here," the master said, "He's
cracked."

Far up aloft the skysail gear click-clacked
Against the skysail masts. The topsails strained,
And every inch of her hot hull complained.

Dawn came. Her rail was down, deep to the sea;
The smoke drove from her, eddying to lee.

"Men," warned the master, "now our best is done,

We'd better lower the boat. Her chance is gone.
Over a thousand miles to land. Her fate is sealed."
The ship's pig on the forward deck-house squealed.
"Hark at old Paddy, sir. He don't want us to go."
The master smiled. "Now, lads, it's going to blow.
It's not too late to clear the boat away.
It will be soon. We'd better not delay."

They looked up at her sails, looked to each mast,
Looked to the stormy clouds low-driven past,
Looked to her decks from which gray smoke wreaths
came.

Sudden the cook yelled, "Come now—praise His
name!"

The sailors swore. The master bit his lip.

"I hate to order them to leave the ship."

He turned, his eyes gone hard, his voice grown stern,
"All hands now, to the boat! The ship must burn."

They left her so. She swung into the breeze,
And lay, with sails aback, on crimsoned seas.
While waves rolled over her the porker squealed,
And squealing rats clung to him as she reeled.
They bit his ears, his back, his twisty tail,
Mingling their fear with his upon the gale.
A young man laughed at porker's dying screech.
The ship's cook rose erect to try to preach.
The lifeboat tossed. Oil bags were hung about
To keep the roaring sea crests safely out.
"I haven't ate no grub in two whole days,"

A young lad whimpered. "Let us give Him praise!"

The cook bawled, loud upon a sudden lull.

"Sit on his face there! Make him stow that bull!"

They pulled him down. "Come, talk of dandy-funk

Or other tasty dishes. Think if you're drunk

How brave you feel!" The old harpooner's hand

Was on the tiller, steering them for land.

"A thousand mile," he muttered. Turning, Chips Said, "Doolan, tell us of those whaling ships.

Or some one sing." One of the sailors said, "I left my fiddle

In the ship's galley by the cook's old griddle.

We haven't any music."—"Watch her, Doolan!"

The boat tossed high. The mate called, "Quit your fooling!"

The mate and master with averted faces

Watched the doomed clipper jerking at her braces.

She faded in a mist; then rose again,

Breasting the sea tops, every ratline plain.

The flames leapt from her deck. They licked her rails.

Hot tongues reached hungering for her white sails.

Her crew looked round. Their blazing ship was gone.

The master's face was white. "Her torture's done."

Then the rain ceased, and she came full in view,

A little rift above her showing blue,

A little lilt of sunlight on her mast,
A little kiss for loveliness by-past,
A little memory, to ease her dying,
Of youth and freedom, and the white birds flying
To greet her when she came, light-footed, home,
About her bows a bubbling field of foam.
The cloud rift closed. The rain came back. A
blast
Ripped out of her, and overboard each mast.
Waves leaped upon her. Her master turned his
head.
All men were silent, honoring the dead.

They made a hundred miles toward their port,
Without a bite of food, with water short.
The sea birds saw them; hovered o'er, then went,
Like washed souls sorry for man's sacrament.
A whale passed by. Old Doolan stiffly rose
On tottering feet to murmur, "There she blows!"
A boy, delirious, in the bottom lay.
*"Wot is the price of di'mon' rings today?
I promised my best girl a di'mon' ring."*
A wan thirst-tortured sailor tried to sing.
Some drank sea water, then sprang overboard
Crazed by the salt. And cook cried, "Praise the
Lord!"
The mate and master shook each other's hands.
"Praise be to God! Our good God understands!"
The mad cook shouted. "I 'opes He does," said
Chips.

A dying sailor spoke of famous ships,
Naming the *Dreadnaught* and the *Flying Cloud*.
The hours dragged on till none could speak aloud.

When the gale died, when blue broke bright once
more,

A steamer found the lifeboat, far from shore.
Save for one man the boat was empty quite.
He'd cast their corpses overboard by night.
His hands upraised, he whispered to them slowly,
And, dying, murmured, "*Holy, holy, holy!*"

BILL ADAMS.

HOW?

How can Death ever make a tryst for me
With those whose long heart-hoarded images
Still look upon me with unfallen youth
Out of the Happy Isles of Memory?
Passed from themselves and far from me, their
light

Lost in an unimaginable Light
Or sunken to dark flame, I might not know
Nor soul nor body. But save Death restore
Those heaven-climbers I had known when young
Life has been vain. I am as one who takes
An angel-haunted road to find it fade
In a void desert. I must meet again
That slender-lovely Candle of the Lord,
Wife of my friend, and unto all his friends
A gentle sister, and that handsome youth
From reverie that seemed like indolence
Waking with haughty transcendental speech
That whipt the will, and our grey visitor
Who taught me, not in words, but showed to me,
In vision on the intellectual air,
The noble images that once were seen
In the ritual of the holy mysteries.
The unconsumable, unsubduable,
Winged, airy beauty of the psyche, born
From this thick husk, as in Hellenic myth
The glittering goddess from the head of Zeus
Uprose—all who were on the path with me,

Lamp-bearing pilgrims. But can Death appoint
A trysting-place where ancient shall be young,
The fallen upright, those on heavenly heights
Shrink to the stature that I knew them by?
And will they tryst with one who may to them
Be as a candle blown long, long ago?
I know not how our wandering lives may mix
In the hereafter, save that it may be true.
That ancient imagination of the seers
Of a profundity where all that was,
Or ever shall be, glows and breathes in an
Eternal present. Thither might I come
After the purifying, when towards us
The Majesty is melted, and becomes
Tender as to a child, and breathes in us,
And life is winged and wonderful and gay,
And we are ever hurrying to a Youth
Older than Time, though it bedrape itself
With phantoms of our youth that blossom ever
With loveliness of Uncreated Light.
If after the stern purifying fires
Death brings us to a so transfigured past
Within the Everliving, and we can take
From all that is whatever is our own,
Life has been justified. For if our dreams
Be not immortal, the soul is not, the soul
Is but a congregation of high dreams.

Æ

VALE

THIS was the heavenly hiding place
Wherein the spirit laughed a day,
All its proud ivories and fires
Shrunk to a shovelful of clay.

It must have love, this silent earth,
To leap up at the King's desire,
Moving in such a noble dance
Of wreathèd ivory and fire.

It will not stir for me at all,
Nor answer me with voice nor gleam.
Adieu, sweet-memored dust, I go
After the Master for the dream.

Æ.

AND IN THE HANGING GARDENS

AND in the hanging gardens there is rain
From midnight until one, striking the leaves
And bells of flowers, and stroking boles of planes,
And drawing slow arpeggios over pools,
And stretching strings of sound from eaves to
ferns.

The princess reads. The knave of diamonds sleeps.
The king is drunk, and flings a golden goblet
Down from the turret window (curtained with
rain)
Into the lilacs.

And at one o'clock

The vulcan under the garden wakes and beats
The gong upon his anvil. Then the rain
Ceases, but gently ceases, dripping still,
And sound of falling water fills the dark
As leaves grow bold and upright, and as eaves
Part with water. The princess turns the page
Beside the candle, and between two braids
Of golden hair. And reads: "From there I went
Northward a journey of four days, and came
To a wild village in the hills, where none
Was living save the vulture and the rat,
And one old man, who laughed, but could not
speak.

The roofs were fallen in; the well grown over
With weed; and it was there my father died.
Then eight days farther, bearing slightly west,

The cold wind blowing sand against our faces,
The food tasting of sand. And as we stood
By the dry rock that marks the highest point,
My brother said: 'Not too late is it yet
To turn, remembering home.' And we were silent
Thinking of home." The princess shuts her eyes
And feels the tears forming beneath her eyelids,
And opens them, and tears fall on the page.
The knave of diamonds in the darkened room
Throws off his covers, sleeps, and snores again.
The king goes slowly down the turret stairs
To find the goblet.

And at two o'clock
The vulcan in his smithy underground
Under the hanging gardens, where the drip
Of rain among the clematis and ivy
Still falls from sipping flower to purple flower,
Smites twice his anvil, and the murmur comes
Among the roots and vines. The princess reads:
"As I am sick, and cannot write you more,
Nor have not long to live, I give this letter
To him, my brother, who will bear it south
And tell you how I died. Ask how it was,
There in the northern desert, where the grass
Was withered and the horses, all but one,
Perished." . . . The princess drops her golden
head

Upon the page between her two white arms
And golden braids. The knave of diamonds wakes
And at his window in the darkened room

Watches the lilacs tossing, where the king
Seeks for the goblet.

And at three o'clock
The moon inflames the lilac heads, and thrice
The vulcan, in his root-bound smithy, clangs
His anvil; and the sounds creep softly up
Among the vines and walls. The moon is round,
Round as a shield above the turret top.
The princess blows her candle out, and weeps
In the pale room, where scent of lilac comes,
Weeping, with hands across her eyelids, thinking
Of withered grass, withered by sandy wind.
The knave of diamonds, in his darkened room,
Holds in his hands a key, and softly steps
Along the corridor, and slides the key
Into the door that guards her. Meanwhile, slowly,
The king, with raindrops on his beard and hands,
And dripping sleeves, climbs up the turret stairs,
Holding the goblet upright in one hand;
And pauses on the midmost step, to taste
One drop of wine, wherewith wild rain has mixed.

CONRAD AIKEN.

SPIDER WEB

A SPIDER, black and yellow,
Half darkness and half sun,
Has with eight spindles spun
A soft and silken pillow
For flies to rest upon.

Wind-swift they come and swifter;
But if the day be lazy,
A drowsy one, a drifter,
Leaving his latest daisy,
His wings designed in crescents
And dripping iridescence,
Seizes with curious hands
The spider's woven strands.

As strong as silver, soft
As filaments of fur,
The spider hangs aloft
His lovely gossamer.
And there the quick flies drone
And make enormous stir,
But never shall a one
Again be wanderer.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING.

TIME

TIME's unvalled room where simultaneously
The past, the present and the future act
Their far events; where all that is to be
Occurred when all that was became a fact.
And here is no duration, only space
Apparent to our vision, were that ample,
Where past and present and the future face
The selfsame instant, only dreams can sample.

Here love imploring lies with love rewarded;
Rewarded love with love now satisfied;
For time is not, as some say, scythed and sworded;
Nothing's destroyed; the dead have never died.
But ours is the dilemma of the blind
Who only know the things their fingers find.

KENNETH SLADE ALLING.

THE CAGE

MAN, afraid to be alive,
Shut his soul in senses five;
From fields of Uncreated Light
Into the crystal tower of Sight;
And from the roaring Songs of Space
Into the small, flesh-carven place
Of the Ear whose cave impounds
Only small and broken sounds;
And to this narrow sense of Touch
From Strength that held the stars in clutch;
And from the warm ambrosial Spice
Of flowers and fruits of Paradise
To the frail and fitful power
Of Tongue's and Nose's sweet and sour.
And toiling for a sordid wage
There in his self-created cage,
Ah, how safely barred is he
From menace of Eternity.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG.

INLAND GULL

THE sea has gone and two bright eyes are troubled,
Distress has numbed the keenness of a small quick
brain,

Against grey skies two superb wings are beating,
Weary of flight across the endless chequered
plain—

Weary of fields and baffled by strange cities—
Eager to fold themselves above salt tides again.
Green fields, brown fields, and moving dots of men-
folk,

Horses and clattering things that move in swaying
grain—

But never that far gleam of white-edged waters
Two rapid eyes are searching for in vain—
Those men-things in the field are pointing upward:
Crack!—and a tired heart is racked with keener
pain:

The flashing pinions falter, fail, turn over,
Two sea-bred wings lie limp on inland clover,
Two sea-bright eyes shall not greet sea again.

Why did you leave them, then, the seaways and
the salt tides?

Sand bank and cliff and empty miles of sea?
What stress of weather or Fate-generated impulse
Brought your strong curving wings where they
should never be?

You had your dangers there but they were shared
by others,
By all your glossy Free Companionry,
But in these smoky skies girt in by cities
You wing alone for every eye to see—
For every yokel with a gun in harvest
To try if a chance shot shall bring you down:
And now the skies are emptied of your beauty,
And now a monarch's murdered by a clown.

KENNETH ASHLEY.

SWAMPLANDS

ALWAYS it was a lonely place, the marsh.
Jim Blake had meant to drain it, when he built
His cottage on the margin, for his bride—
It was his only hope of house and lands.
It had spelled terror to his wife at first,
That endless threnody of whispering sedge
In long, wide twilights when the frogs were loud—
Night came so palpably and audibly!
But after years of looking with his eyes
At future grainlands running into gold,
She found it home. And then a son was born,
Eldest, triumphant, with his father's curls.
She had no time with Danny and the twins,
To listen for the creeping sound of wind
Through the dead reeds, until one silent day
When Jim was brought in by the lumbermen
With a brief word that he had reckoned wrong,
And a great oak in falling flung an arm
And tapped him on the head, and he was gone.
And now the swamp remained a worthless place,
A taunt, a chiding, like the light of day
Striking a dream's consummate hour to ash.
And yet the children loved it. There were wilds
And secrets waiting there to be discovered,
The redbirds' nests, and dragonflies, and cat-tails,
And stalks of iris to be plucked for Mother,
And tadpoles for a bowl, if Mother would,
And curling ferns for all the border beds.

She worried when they strayed too far to call—
Always a swamp is an uncanny place,
You never know what may lie hidden in it.
One day the children came upon a brook
Seeping among the mounds of grass, and then
A sudden open space with seashore sand.
And Danny ran with a discoverer's shout,
Or tried to run, but could not lift his feet.
Turning, he saw the twins come marching on,
Loyal an army as a man could wish,
And cried, "Stay where you are! Quicksand! Go
back!"

They were too small to know, but they obeyed
An instant, and one laughed and tossed a ball,
Which Danny hurled with such a stinging force
It sent them tumbling back a step or two
And brought a mute, hurt wonder to their eyes,
While the inexorable sand drew on
Over his ankles and above his knees,
For every struggle claiming greater spoils.
Transfixed and deaf, the little children stood,
And turned to run, and, frightened, stayed to look,
While the boy's shouts hoarsened and choked with
fear,

Till calling on his Mother's name, the voice
Was gone, the grasping arm, the curly hair,
Till the gorged sand slumped vacantly to sleep.
The children looked into each other's eyes,
And cried aloud, and terror led their feet
Stumbling among the clumps of grass, to home.

And one of them sank down beside the door,
Turning his face against the wall to sob,
And one ran to his Mother, crying out
Mad, incoherent words that never were
In any language underneath the sun.
But snatching up the child, the mother ran
Among the reeds with flying feet, and called
To Danny, and put down the child to lead,
And suddenly he braced his feet, and stood
Squarely and would not move, but clung with fear,
Pointing to footsteps ended in the sand,
Where the long finger of the ripples tried
To write in flowing script upon the spot
A word she did not need to read, and through
The utter silence came a moan of reeds,
And red-eyed sunset turned away his face
And bowed his head. And after dark had come,
Across the marsh a long wind wailed for her,
And the white moon wandered, with staring eyes,
A phantom mother, searching, searching, there
Out on the marshes, in the place of her
Who stilled the frightened crying, lit the lamp,
And somehow found two bowls of bread and milk,
And helped the twins undress and go to sleep.

MARY FINETTE BARBER.

RITUAL

EARS of strong music soaked their fill;
Eyes gripped that altar; Nostrils smelt
The peace of a high place and still;
 Brain was at anchor; Body knelt;

Solemnly—like some young recruit
 Who steps officious from his squad—
The Soul drew up to the salute
 And stood erect in front of God.

OWEN BARFIELD.

EVANGEL

[*A morgue. Around a white oblong stand three women, who meditate in silence.*]

*Round these ashes of a fire,
Sisters, burn your dead desire—
Black for woe, and red for hate,
And white for love and green for fate.
On the air of death-rot cry—
Snatch the shroud and see his eye.*

The Drab. When heat steamed from the low
gutter,
The window-shades banged loudly, the house
rested.

I used to lie with my stockings off, feeling greasy,
A trickle of sweat between the pillow
And my bare back, trying to sleep. But
Always down through my dark eyelids
Came damp light from the dazzle off the ceiling.

The Lady. He said to me, "We go two ways,
not one."

And so these twenty winters of no feeling!

The Drab. At nightfall came singing,
And tinny tambourines.

The Old Woman. O Lord, Lord, Lord!

The Drab. And we went out—Mae, Pearl and
me—

To see whatever was it, the crowd running.

And he stood on the corner, on a soap-box, preaching.

The Old Woman. O Lord, Lord, Lord!
Come in here, ducky, let the calf alone.
Can bobbing curls get like old barn-web?

The Drab. And he looked down at me out of
the arc-light,
At me in my war-paint.

The Old Woman. It might be him. It might
be him.

The Lady. Summer in the country is, oh, quite
lovely.
Sunday night so different—not the avenue,
Crowds and black-bastioned churches and dim
cold doors.

The Drab. Beautiful he was with his queer
eyes
Snapping out from under his moppy hair.

The Lady. Country churches strike a reveren-
tial bell.

They told me of him, and I went in to prayer.

The Drab. A man is known by his fine thin
body,
And by the eyes out of which he looks
Gold at you often through the night, and by his
hair

When it makes a gold pool
In the dip of your shoulder, and by his hand
Lying like warm gold on your breast.
By none of these was he known to me.

I let him save me.

The Lady. A face came through
The faint light of old white-painted wood—
“I see one here among us from the city.”

(Escaped from town fatigue, felt that year as usual.)

The Drab. There was Pearl and Mae, but he
looked at me,
And, “Out of the street,” he said, “I will lift you
up.”

They laughed, but I let him take my hand.

The Lady. Always quivering up like a pointer
smelling birds.

Souls to be saved, souls to be saved, was what the
wind blew.

The Old Woman. Looks older than his father
dead in the four-poster.

I rinsed his teeth and drew them from the water.

The Drab. Old black black-a-muffins mumbles.

The Old Woman. He thought he was a prophet.
All life jumbles.

The Lady. Following his voice that seemed to
cry out of a red wood
Between the gloomy fiery boughs—

The Old Woman. He always seemed to
blame.

The Lady. “For He is love, love, love—love
ye and learn by fire.
Love’s in the strokes, love’s in the flame!”

The Old Woman. His father used to give him
up and down!

"I must be about my work." Lord, *see* his work.
And, "One can't gather power in this town,
It lies beyond—outside—while one is young."
This was his springtime, couldn't *we* see that!—
"Later I shall go down"—stomp, stomp, stomp—
Pacing in the dead leaves out in the yard.

The Drab. God made him ugly at last, with
his nose peaked.

The Old Woman. Sometimes half the night he
kept his father wakeful.

Stomp, stomp, stomp, upstairs across his room—
Back and forth, back and forth. The floor creaked.

The Drab. What good did it do him to go get
crazy?

The Old Woman. Now you could gather the
dead leaves of him in a rakeful.

The Lady. "Down through the smoky autumns
of this world

I shall go down, later I shall go down,
When power shall scatter off me like dry leaves,
And I shall burn to wind"—an August noon,
With the burnt hills expectant of September.

The Old Woman. That spring came all wind-
like, and he was gone.

The Lady. "I shall go down"—to gutter-
trotting and singing?

The Drab. Me carrying the hymns and Bible
for him all that time!

The Lady. The things we dream are in our
end's indictment.

The Drab. And the little bell I went on ring-
ing!

Feeling the flesh no more nor the drink's excite-
ment.

The Lady. "Not a sparrow falls"—the bird
we found wing-broken.

The Drab. Saved. Saved. His queer eyes
through me gleaming.

One long shiver held me, in cool touch
With purple and music, and a white shape
Hanging toward me in pain that pleased me.

The Lady. Against his mouth he held it, suffer-
ing such.

The Drab. "You hymning bat! oh, you be-
holied smutch
Of whoredom!"—nice words from girls you worked
with!

The Old Woman. Lord, Lord, you lay upon me
doubt.

The Drab. I struck the tambourine.

The Lady. My burn-
ing wish:

Oh, for the soft keen muzzle to point me out,
To part the cover where I hide, and find me,
The wild bright-feathered me!

The Old Woman. Stomp, stomp,
stomp.

Last week the land looked dead.

The Lady. The ground froze round me. I
was bred

For opulence, not his bleak woods of hunting.

The Drab. "Sleep, sleep no more upon sin's
gilded bed"—

So me the white candle, like before a cross.

The Old Woman. Old rubbish and old boughs
trod under.

The Lady. The callow prophet—he never saw
the letter!

The dim old farmhouse. Answering it at night.
Downstairs they were closing windows. There
was thunder.

The Drab. Me floating back at him a holy
light—

So he could remember God is love!

The Lady. The lightning played while I sus-
pended words

To answer his, my husband's (written smooth)—
"You've been away too long religionizing—"

(That? Not quite, my silver-shaking fool!)

The Old Woman. Life like an old cow chewing
of her cud.

The Lady. "—Doing as always what you ask
me, I've procured

The place for him assisting in our church."

The Drab. I was a fool, a fool!

The Lady. Three drops of rain crashed down.

The Old Woman. Ducky, now leave off Daisy
with that birch!

The Lady. I wrote: "I'm coming home tomorrow. It's so cool.

About *him*—I have changed my mind.

Where, after all, would he fit,

Smudging our pulpit with his Jordan mud!"

The Drab. I was a loony fool!

The Lady. So never for him
Wine for water, sweetmeats for bread, for dream-
ing

A cushioned seat beneath a Toledo choir,

A gilded organ Seraphim-tall behind him,

With angels and devils blowing in its pipes

Until he cried, "Love, love, love—

Love in the flame, in the strokes!"—

Coming to me in a music of fire.

The Drab. I ought to've seized him on the
mouth—

I ought to've kissed him like a warm snake—

I ought to've licked him, whispered, "See,

I have cheated you—I'm still a whore—feel my
flesh—

Maybe I am the mystery you are burning for!"

The Lady. Dry corpse, sleep with your prophecy
and drouth.

The Drab. Now Pearl and Mae lift back their
skirts from me.

The Old Woman. Try. Try. Alone. Bury
him decently.

*Cover him up and leave him dead.
Sisters turn and sisters tread—
Slow for woe, and fast for hate,
And light for love, and hard for fate.
Round and around and around him go,
Hate-foot, hot-foot, rickets-toe.*

WILTON AGNEW BARRETT.

CYPRIAN HYMN

SAFE in the courts of Love, we have forgotten—the sunny courts of Love set round with cedars—we have forgotten the pits of shame, the dismal swamps, dead trees with scaling bark and deadly vines, close-clinging, trailing slime. . . . Oh, wonder! Oh, praised be Venus that we should ever have come through, past sights that freeze the blood like fearful dreams, dreams that beset the helpless spirit to sleep abandoned. Praised be Love!

There by his mottled pool Narcissus lies, the prey of obscene birds—Narcissus, who so long time, deaf to the tender invitations of woodland girls, sealed up within the circle of his own passion, beseeching himself for love, for mercy, bloodless, haggard with incessant craving, was made the victim of his own image. His own image, green from the mantled pool, rose like a wraith of mist from the stagnant water, and like a serpent round his throat and loins, strangled Narcissus. . . . How could we ever pass a sight so fearful? Praised be Venus!

How did we escape pollution of harpies, filthy birds with throats insatiable, forever swooping and snatching filth? Or those caged apes that torture one another and mishandle, or crouch alone in the gloom, passive and melancholy on their

haunches? How did we escape the trampling of centaurs, herds of centaurs male and female, stampeding, spattering mud from frantic hooves, and straining to sever human breasts and shoulders from loins of beastly mare and stallion? Praised be Venus!

Here in the courts of Love set round with cedars, poplar and maple spring in mounded spires, and oaks tough-fibred, branches firm-set in trunks millennial, down shameless aisles of woodland cast the shadow of their green fulfillment. Gravelled ways through grassy borders lead down by terraced gardens, by unexhausted fountains tossing rainbowed spray. And marble urns at measured intervals offer to Love oblation of purple flowers and the incense of flowers.

Round about the temple—set on the greenest hill, pillar and pediment of yellow marble veined with purple and rose—the Graces scatter the dew of the lawns with rose-veined feet, and there by light of the rising moon young Hyacinths unharmed play with the nymphs at discus-throwing. Unharmed Actæon gazes on bathing Artemis. Leaving her tunic, and leaving her bow and arrows and her maidens, she runs inviting down the leafiest track. Happy Actæon! No fear of spotted hide and branching horns! You shall come on human feet

with a man's hands to scatter incense on the sacred flame!

Oh, praised be Venus, we have come through the place of tombs, the lurid desert without moon, without a star! Our dragging feet we have freed from the sticky meshes of that nightmare. We could not move, we could not turn our eyes, when we beheld the son of Laius caught in the clutch of that riddling monster, half woman, half wildcat, stony haunches spreading backward in the dark clamped to the rock, the coffin-cover. Woman's breasts gleaming in the red light shed from a woman's eyes—her mother's eyes beaming with tender light, her mother's lips glued to his withering bloodless lips. Soon he will lie beside his father beneath the rock, beneath those stony haunches. . . . Praised be Venus! we have looked on Œdipus and have forgotten. We have forgotten, for we have looked on Œdipus and knew him.

There in that lurid night we have seen men running, running in terror and glancing backward at men with knives pursuing. They were distorted shadows of themselves. And women terror-stricken, haunted with voices, haunted with shapes and voices, apes and parrots, whispering, shouting, offering and accusing. These were their own cravings, severed fragments of self disowned, strangled and buried, returning livid from the tomb, the

dead demanding to be reunited with the living. Ah, seldom shall any, by grace of Love knowing herself, win through and find her peace within these sunny courts set round with cedars!

O blackest night behind the stony hill of Golgotha, bristling with spikes and sabres and lighted only with pallid and with blood-dripping blossoms of the cactus! There upon blasted cypress boles pale Christs hang agonizing, passionately submissive and beseeching imaginary legionaries to drive their nails through feet and hands. Oh, self-accusing, self-exalting, these know not Venus, but with blood and gall, with thorns and spikes crucifying the flesh, they have raised themselves to godhead; they hang exalted above a world shuddering and terror-stricken.

Sadder than these, most sad and death-distilling, the tranced and lotos-bearing Buddhas, impotent, each in his gilded shrine, his gilded smile snake-like playing about his thin and sensual lips. Lovers of self and self-sufficient, in vain for them the temple bells, dropping like lotus-petals through the air, measure the hours for those that labor in the rice-fields. In vain for them the pilgrims winding upward make the ascent of the holy mountain. In vain the sunlight prints on earth the image of the pine-branch; the moon follows the sun across the airy vault, and lovers together bathe in the

moonlight as in holy water. Self-enchanted, these are transported to a land where all is nothing.

We have known these horrors. We have been Narcissus and gazed despairingly on our own image. We have been Œdipus. We have chattered with apes and spattered mud in the mad stampede of centaurs. We have hung upon the blasted cypress and cried out for nails in hands and feet. We have folded hands and felt the gilded smile crawl round our lips, while the sun faded and the temple bells grew faint and ceased upon our ears stopped up. Oh, praised be Venus! we have known ourselves and, knowing, we have freed our feet from the meshes of that nightmare. And now with feet unfettered we scatter dew of the lawns before the rose-veined temple. In the courts of Love we have carved stone and raised up pillars. We have set words to the lyre and sung them, in Dorian mode and Lydian. We have known love and the fruits of love weigh down our boughs like golden apples. Praised be Love!

But last we paused beside that still and starless water, grown round with willows black and lustreless—that water, not water, that sticky, pallid and repulsive fluid—drippings and drainings of wasted strength—that dim grey sheet of lake where in the center rises an isle funereal. Steep black rocks encircling a grove of cypress, at whose feet by the

water's edge dim portals open inward to the cavernous heart of the rock. Are these the gates from which at birth we issued, that like a magnet draw desperate men across the lake of death, before their time, like desperate children, to crawl back in their mother's womb? One such we saw, shining in dead white cerements and rigid, floating in his black barque, a shape of death, having already paid the final price for peace.

We dared not linger, we dared not gaze, but dragged our feet through mud and slime from that shore bewitched, and ran like mad, sweating and shivering, until we reached the courts set round with cedars, where men and women sing together and dance in the sunlight, having forgotten the pits of shame, the dismal swamps, the place of tombs, the lake of death, knowing themselves at last and knowing Love. Oh, praised be Love!

JOSEPH WARREN BEACH.

JULIET

How did the Party go in Portland Square?
I cannot tell you; Juliet was not there.
And how did Lady Gaster's Party go?
Juliet was next me, and I do not know.

HILAIRE BELLOC.

THE LOST WIFE

IN the daytime, maybe, your heart's not breaking,
For there's the sun and the sky and working
And the neighbors to give you a word or hear you,
But, ah, the long nights when the winds come shak-
ing

The cold black curtain, pulling and jerking,
And no one there in the bed to be near you.

And worse than the clods on the coffin falling
Are the clothes in the closet that no one wears now
And the things like hairpins you're always finding.
And you wouldn't mind the ghost of her calling
As much as knowing that no one cares now
If the carpet fades when the sun gets blinding.

I look in the houses, when twilight narrows,
And in each a man comes back to a woman.
The thought of that coming has spurs to ride me.
—Death, you have taken the great like sparrows,
But she was so slight, so small, so human.
You might have left her to lie beside me.

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT.

REHOBAM

I

In Jerusalem
Rehoboam was King.
In Jerusalem
Where the angels sing.
He had diamonds,
He had gold,
He had sheep
In the fold.
He had God's house
That his father built
And a fine sword
With a jewelled hilt.

There were priests
In his halls;
Strong soldiers
On his walls.
He had prisons
Dark and deep
And great foes
To spoil his sleep.

In Jerusalem
Rehoboam, the King
Found no joy
In anything.

All his diamonds
Were dust,
All his sheep
A beggar's crust.
Slender maidens
Sleek of limb,
Small of breast,
They wearied him.

II

Jereboam
In his tent
Knew the way
Things went.
He had eyes
In dark places.
He had many
Changing faces.
He knew all the
Murmuring,
All the sorrow
Of the King.

There were foes
On the marches
Where the desert
Sun parches
Foe and friend.
Where the kites

Trail the roads
Through long nights.

Jereboam
Sought his lord
His shield
And sword.
He found him
Hollow-eyed,
Found him weeping
And he cried:
"Oh, king,
Life is hollow!
Out sword, then!
Follow! Follow!
This surely,
This is deep,
After this, King,
You shall sleep."

Rehoboam
Raised his face,
All white
With pain's grace!
"Will the blood
Of my foe
Tell me all
That I would know?
Will the foeman's
Gasp of death

Teach me
Why I draw breath?

“Oh, friend,
Faithful warder,
Go and guard
My border.
Do not think
Of my pain!
When I love
My sword again,
That day
You and I,
Banners flying
Swords high,
Burning like
God’s light
Shall sweep the foeman
From the night!”

III

White ships
With sails white
Lay silent
In the night.
Pale stars
Far and high
Drove darkness
From the sky.

In the night
The great King
Came to see
His navies swing
From side to side
With the slow swing
Of the tide.
Far west
Grew the sea
The King's pride
Uneasily
Sat upon him
Like a crown,
Bound his soul
And weighed him down.

In the east
The moon stood;
In the west
The dark flood.
In the King's heart
Rose pride
Higher than the
Sea's tide.
Pride and pain
Ran together
And they wove
A strong tether.
"Oh, my ships,
And oh, sea,

Be at peace
For all of me.

Swift ships
That sail far,
For your guide
A thin star,
Tossed upon
The sea's breast,
In the end
You rest!
No star
Shines for me!
No harbor
Ends my sea!"

IV

Came a woman
To the King.
Came to him
A-whispering.
"Eyes like moons
And golden hair,
Rest, oh, King,
Your burdens there.
Her cool hands
Upon your head,
Her warm body
In your bed."

In the King's eye
Shone no light,
In his soul
A cold white
Dream of peace
On high places
Loomed close!
Warm embraces,
Long kisses,
Warm, clinging,
Soft whispers,
The stinging
Lash of passion,
What were these
In his dream
Of ecstasies?

And the King said:
"Bring the child."
And the wise woman
Smiled.

She was brought
In raiment fine.
She was given
Fragrant wine.
She was taken
To the King,
Lovely, white,
A small thing,

Soft of flesh
And soft spoken,
Such a toy
As Kings have broken
Endless years
Without number
Before a pale
Night's slumber.

Said the King:
"Take my soul,
Make it clean,
And make it whole!
I am weary,
Comfort me,
I am bound,
Set me free!"

She took him
To her breast,
She whispered
"Here is rest!"
She was small,
She was sweet,
Lily petals
Were her feet.
She was slim
Moon-white,
And her hair
Was dawn-bright.

But the King
Laughed loudly,
Laughed long
And proudly:
"Oh, child,
I asked for bread.
Would you lead me
To my bed?
"Dear child,
The long years,
Before you know
My tears.
Do not weep,
I am a stone.
Let me mourn
Alone!"

v

In Jerusalem
Rehoboam, the King
Called his priests
To a counselling:
"There is no joy
In the hunting horn,
In a young son
Newly-born.
No joy
In the wide sea,
In the secret

Of my temple key.
There is weariness
In God's song.
What makes life
So long?"
"Oh, great, oh, King,"
Said the priests.
(They were fat
From weary feasts.)
"There are women,
There is war,
What are you
A King for?
All men envy you,
Oh, King;
Wallow
In their envying."

"This is weary,
This is dead,
This thing
That you have said.
There was once,
I was a boy,
In a keen sword
A fine joy.
There was once
A wild light
In a woman's eye
At night.

There was once
A quiet peace
In my herd's
Increase.
It is nothing,
It has passed,
I have nothing left
At last."

Fat priests whispered
Head to head,
For the King's word
Was dread.
Words of honey
Died unspoken
By the King's
Sorrow broken.
There was fear
In their eyes,
They were old priests
And wise.
King's questions
Must have answers
And the smoothest
Necromancers
May be hanged
On high places
When it pleases
Royal graces.

So they carolled:
"Oh, King,
Loudly
The heavens sing.
All your vanities
Are riven,
To the King
It is given
Now to look
With open eyes
Through the gates
Of Paradise."

Like the whirr
Of Fate's loom
Was the silence
In the room.
And the King,
His eyes gleaming
Gazed upon the priests,
Dreaming:
"Have I truly,
All wise,
Have I looked
On Paradise?
Oh, my priests,
Think well,
Have I not looked
Into hell?"

Sang the priests
"Oh, great
Not for you
This fate!
Raise your heart,
Oh, King!
You shall hear
God sing!"
Then swelled
The King's veins
Like the wind
Through wheat lanes
Swept the storm
Of his anger,
Vanished
The King's languor.

"Fat priests,"
Sang the King.
"Fat harpists
On one string,
Tempted am I
For your lies
To send you seeking
Paradise.

"Fat priests,
Word bleaters,
Wise fools
And great eaters,

Go and leave me
To my sorrow,
Some shall hang
To-morrow!"

VI

Loud roared
The sea.
Winds raged
Stormily.
Clouds swept
On the skies
Covering
The moon's eyes.

"Rehoboam,"
Said the wind.
"Rehoboam
You are blind!
You are tempest
You are free,
You are earth
And sea!
Rehoboam,
Great King,
In you
Is everything!"

Rehoboam
Stony eyed

Hearkened
And the song died.

“Rehoboam,”
Sang the sea.
“Great King,
Child to me.
You are young,
I am old,
I know more
Than you can hold!
Hear the weeping
Of my waves,
My children,
My slaves;
They die
And rise afresh,
You die
Like all flesh.”

Rehoboam
Raised his head,
And the sea's song
Went dead.

“Great King,”
The moon sang
Like an ache,
A long pang.
“Great soul,

King of pain
I am all
That you can gain.
Rehoboam,
King of sorrow,
Heir to my
To-morrow!

“Oh, moon,
Oh, sea,
Oh, wind,
Oh, me!
Mad singers,”
Cried the King.
“Teach me
To sing!
I am nothing,
I am great,
I am Life,
And I am Fate.

“Wake, God,
From your sleep,
I bid you,
I, the deep,
Open heavens,
I speak,
I, the end
You seek!”
Then the loud blast

Blew.
Then the stars
Broke through.
From the dark
Release,
In the King's heart
Peace!

DAVID P. BERENBERG.

ALMA VENUS

THE old old men, since they have wit
To count no thing entirely done,
No race completely run,
Will pardon me that I should sit
Beating my days out in the sun;
That I should never lift a finger,
Nor urge one thought ahead,
Except maybe to linger
Upon some image that might else have fled,
A wind-borne shaft of dust, to join the dead.
They'll pardon me that I should choose,
For all my laziness,
Out of the images
That contemplative men may use
To dramatize their reveries,
That of a noble woman in her ease.
No man's that old and anxious after death
But that old memories will flood
With new-born sweetness all his blood
If this grave woman cool him with her breath,
Or drop her hair on him, a perfumed hood.

The old old men will pardon me
That I have, breathing in my mind
And stretched like flesh upon my nerves,
The one life older than all history,

Older than any dust they find
Cluttering Egypt's infancy
Or Greece's full age, or Rome declined,
The oldest goddess that an old man serves.

Looking at her there where she lies
I see, for all the time she's run,
There's not that beauty in her eyes
A common woman might have earned
Out of such seasons in love's school;
Nor yet that look of cool
Extravagant indifference
A lesser spirit might have learned
When so much adulation had been won
And with so little violence.
I think (maybe because of the intense
Heat of the ancient sun)
That she has whirled too many an identical round
Of bitter spring and swollen June
Ever to be completely beautiful
Or perfect like those women snared in dreams.
Looking at her grave nakedness it seems
Her flesh has been long trodden, like that ground
Where the world's playboy and the world's fool,
Where Socrates and Hercules
Tramped smooth the narrow pound.
So if the old old men forgive me
I'll say she is more powerful
And far more wise

Than any Socrates and Hercules.
I think maybe there stir
In her most muscular broad thighs
All men that ever were.

R. P. BLACKMUR.

A SUPERSTITION RE-VISITED

WHILE on the lavender by the door
The rime was gathering chill,
And darkness with a sigh or two
Heard daylight near the hill.

And while the candle drunkenly
Flopped, space and tallow aflare,
Flickering bronze on the half-dropt jaw
Of the woman sitting there,

The baby dying in her arms
Seemed yawning for some breath,
And, as he looked in painful wish,
He saw not mother but Death.

This Death at first was hollow-eyed,
Deep shadows masked the face,
As through the room the crazy light
Tossed blackness and grimace.

But thence, with modulation kind
As a honeyed shower steals on,
He glistened to that tiny soul,
He smiled and his blue eyes shone.

"Thou art the one," the free soul sang
"That camest here with me

No long time since; I'd take thy hand
And go back home with thee."

Soft and soft they crossed the threshold,
Swiftly had they flown,
When through a cottage thatch they heard
A dreaming, quavering moan.

"Loose, loose my hand," the free soul prayed,
"I have here a thing to say."
A moment, and as mild as moonlight
Hand in hand, away!

The grandmother awaking saw
Ann's baby in the bed,
The child was cold, that dear child!
She knew; the child was dead.

Upon her dreadless eye the form
Faded ere long; no more
The tranquil messenger lay beside.
She rose, she opened the door

Where Ann, her swart hair torn, was clutching
The whole world turned to clay,
And the vain milk to her bare bosom
Still was finding way.

"They always come," the old head thought,
"To tell us when they're free,"

And with dry eyes, gentle and wise,
She clasped her daughter, whose wild eyes
Defied eternity.

EDMUND BLUNDEN.

IDOLS

1

THEY must have buried him away from the lake
Lest he be discontented with his grave
And, abandoning his god, rise up once more
And sail. No edge of water was visible
From where he had lain so many hundred years
That every bone was fibrous like old wood,
And the moony skull came crumbling in my hand
When I removed the god that whispered there.

2

Within the skull hate had once eaten, and love
Had woven its intricate iridescent web,
And then the worms and the wet earth had worn
Both love and hate down to the marrow-bone.
Those ancient fingers that mingle with yellow roots
And indeterminably feed the world
May once have baked the fingers of this god
That, still intact, grope after human clay.

3

What surer god have I ever seen than this
Which I deliver from an earthen womb,
This fantasy, this mute, insensate whim
Enduring still besides its maker's dust?

These are the open eyes, the lips that speak
Wonderful things, this is the living thought
That made the man alive and will again,
Whether it be an idol or a poem.

4

Lie close to me, my poem, and comfort me,
Console me with substance lovelier than mine,
Breathe me alive a thousand years from now.
Whisper, beside that rim of an empty moon
Under the earth, the moon I thought with once,
That once to have thought, once to have used the
earth,
Is to have made a god more durable
Than flesh and bone. Lie close to me, my poem.

WITTER BYNNER.

I SOMETIMES THINK

I SOMETIMES think I know how I shall die,
Since I have little time to spare for dying.
A winter day my pretty mare and I
Shall walk into a wood and come out flying—
Startled by some wild animal's queer crying.

And over hills blue heliotrope with cold,
She'll take a course to make a meteor wonder.
A lemon west; a little moon of gold,
And, knowing my heart, my heartless mare there,
 under,
Running the miles until my knees lose hold
And I shall lie quite limp beside a wall—
My horse too far away to hear me fall.

CLINCH CALKINS.

THE SERF

His naked skin clothed in the torrid mist
That puffs in smoke around the patient hooves,
The ploughman drives, a slow somnambulist,
And through the green his crimson furrow
grooves:

His heart, more deeply than he wounds the plain
Long by the rasping share of insult torn,
Red clod, to which the war-cry once was rain
And tribal spears the fatal sheaves of corn,
Lies fallow now. But as the turf divides,
I see in the slow progress of his strides
Over the toppled clods and falling flowers,
The timeless, surly patience of the serf
That moves the nearest to the naked earth
And ploughs down palaces and thrones and
towers.

ROY CAMPBELL.

THE HONEY-MOONERS

ON THE TRAIN

THEY sit across the aisle from me,
The little Jew in Sunday guise,
The white faced girl, with painted lip
And darkened eyes.

He cannot hold his great delight,
His hands reach out to pat her hand,
He bursts, and tries to make her smile
And understand.

She seems to have a single thought,
About herself, her dress, her hair,
She twists, and smooths, and touches up
With studied care.

But there is fear behind her smile,
And something in her shrinks and fails;
She watches him between her lids,
And—shines her nails.

KATHERINE GARRISON CHAPIN.

THE SHOWER

So here we stand beneath the dripping trees,
The drooping trees, and listen to the rain.
It has been dropping now for hours, it seems. The
 bees,
The flies, the rabbits, will never be seen again;
They must be drowned in the streaming grass, and
 thrust
Down the swift torrents bubbling over the dust.
First on one foot, then on the other, we stand;
And sigh, and lean against the knobby trunk;
And catch the jewels in a chilly hand;
And wonder how far down the rain has sunk,
How far down to wash the earth from the roots
And bleach them white, and make the sap run thin.
All the world is filled with bogs, and newts,
Mushrooms, moss, and frogs, and boys kept in
Because of the rain.

 But look! It is giving over!
The drops come slower, the leaves shiver and shake,
And a watery eye blinks out from the sky. Birds
 wake,
The shadow lifts, the lark flushes up from the
 clover,
And the purple shines, and the green, and every
 stone
Glitters and flashes, and the road steams in the sun;

The butterfly preens her wings; the bee has already flown.

Goodbye, old friendly tree, don't you wish you could run?

RICHARD CHURCH.

SONG OF THE THREE SEEDS IN THE MACAW'S BEAK

CRACKED by that accurate beak,
Turned by that rubbery tongue,
This is the final song
The first seed sung:

By no inner instinct
Is my core stirred,
Forced to the light
By this gaudy bird.

A taste on the tongue,
A fraction of power,
Am I who might be
A tall sun-flower!

Cracked by that accurate beak,
Turned by that rubbery tongue,
This is the final song
The second seed sung:

In direct descent
With no single break
From the first sun-flower
My line I take.

Dull duplication!
Is this not best?

To add to the bloom
Of a scarlet crest?

Cracked by that accurate beak,
Turned by that rubbery tongue,
This is the final song
The third seed sung:

Whether grown great,
By one's own law—
Or submerged to a fraction
Of red macaw,

We return to the nothing
From which we came.
To me at least
It is much the same!

Cracked by that accurate beak,
Turned by that rubbery tongue,
These are the final songs
The three seeds sung.

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH.

THE RACERS

I saw a hundred racers in a row,
With tendons set and youthful eyes alight
In burning zeal and glory of the fight,
Tense for the long awaited signal, "Go!"
Far-off, veiled in a misty sunset glow,
Across a rose-hued valley of the night,
The bourn was beckoning, almost out of sight,
With Time and Fate the umpires of the show.

I saw those runners—not a dozen now—
Nearing the goal, a wan and sandy waste
Toward which they hobbled, they who once had
 raced,—
Toothless, with rheumy eyes and puckered brow
And shrunken, torpid features, gibbering how
They came out first amid life's fire and haste.

STANTON A. COBLENTZ.

THE LANDING

THE great ship, lantern-girdled,
The tender standing by;
The waning stars, cloud-shrouded,
The land that we descry.

The pale land is our homeland,
And we are bound therefor;
On her lawns nor in her coppice
No birds as yet make stir.

But birds are flying round us,
The white birds of the sea—
It is the breeze of morning,
This that comes hummingly.

And like the talk that comes from
A room where a babe is born—
Such clearness and such mystery
Are in words said on the morn;

Where, as a nation cloven,
In two our ranks divide:
One half on the high ship's bulwark,
And one half by the tender's side;

Where, like a people sundered,
Who yet have each other's hail,
Faces look down from the bulwark,
And look up from the tender's rail.

And names and words are spoken—
 "Nancy," "Mary," "Owen."
"Good-bye, and keep your promise!"
 "Farewell to you, my son!"

They are more spirit-stirring
 Than any words that are
Remembered from the spokesmen
 Of any avatar!

"Oh, all I had to tell you!"
 "Ellen," "Michael," "Joan!"
"Good-bye, and God be with you!"
 "And can it be you're gone!"

The great ship, lantern-girdled,
 Her engines thresh, immerse—
The great ship that had station
 Takes motion for her course!

Her little course the tender,
 Our little ship, goes on—
The stars, they are fast waning,
 But we'll land ere 'tis the dawn!

Green, greener, grows the foreland
 Across the slate-dark sea,
And I'll see faces, places,
 That have been dreams to me!

PADRIAC COLUM.

STEAMER LETTER

I

WHEN in the spires of waves the small bells ring
And are half smothered by the thrusting bow,
When your dark-coultured ship is the only plough
To turn a purple furrow for the spring,
When April is a seagull following
The twisted lanes of foam, not caring how
Green buds expect her in the orchards now,
You will be free as any living thing.
The wind's brief kiss should satisfy your mouth.
Oh, you will be contented I dare say!
And meanwhile since I must not love you south,
I'll try to love a trifle north by east,
And keep the weather for my heart at least
Invariable while you are away.

II

I'll feel the air blow chill to trouble me
As tanagers are troubled by the cold,
Just up from Mexico, and all that gold
Poured down like daffodils upon the sea.
For I am warm now: I have memory
Of shining globes of surf forever rolled
Up a steep beach of tropic sand. I hold
The shell I found and hid away to be
Proof that we two were there: a seashell rosed

By some rich season underneath the wave.
You never knew I had it nor supposed
My love could dredge it up after the storm
Of one such furious breaker. I am warm
Possessing what you never knew you gave.

III

Now that I tell you, do you want it back?
Here in my hand I hold the fluted sea:
Here is the symbol of a tyranny
In wrinkled rose with lacquer of thin black.
Take my full meaning and you will not lack
Chords for the surf that crumbles, melody
Bright-scaled as netted mackerel, caught in three
Or four songs wilder than the moon's wild track
Across wind-broken water through the dark.
You know the shell is only a way of speech
For lapse of passionate breath, for the clear spark
Of rapture shared and lost, for the strange core
Of music heard that we shall hear no more
When we forget the breakers and the beach.

IV

Think of me once or even twice with such
Mild flickering interest or half surmise
I may elude that vagueness of your eyes
Before they change and understand too much.
Miss me on Monday a little when you touch

The salt-scoured rail where the spray gleams and
dries,

Or when you watch a herring-gull that flies
In the wave's hollow on its way to clutch
The elfin fish that nobody ever sees.
It will be Thursday doubtless by that time.
Think of me shrewdly, certain it would tease
My mind as poems do to know the gull
So unaware that it is beautiful,
So unexplained by reason or by rhyme.

V

I wish that you had taught me how to spend
My tropic colors for one subtle gray
To match the dove's in iridescent play
Of rainy light on pearl and light's soft end.
I must disguise myself: I must pretend
The north prevails at last and has its way.
My very songs whatever I may say
Will seem not to remember you, my friend.
Since I have been alone my whole life long,
It should be easier to let you go
Out of my sight and put you in a song.
But how reveal the secret of your brow
Or those grave eyes that find me even now?
And if they do, I need not tell you so.

VI

If you should see a porpoise leaping clear,
No matter when it is, oh think of me!

Some other life that is what I shall be.
I'll cross with ships a hundred times a year,
I'll nudge the ribs of liners lifting sheer
As fabulous whales yet hug my liberty,
And burrow with a snout of ebony
Under the swaying schooners and the queer
Rust-tarnished sulky tramps that stagger and roll,
Hearing the bow draw breath and the foam rustle,
Or whirl at evening from the sea's control
Into the light and dare the setting sun
To plunge and race with me and wallow in fun,
A thing of fluent bone and golden muscle.

VII

More than these moments I must not demand.
Hours are another matter and your own.
I'll trust the busy sea to let you alone,
And London will not know it when you land.
It is too simple almost to understand
That you should go: for me the monotone
When music might have been, for you the drone
Of traffic down the pavement of the Strand.
You will be friends again with towers of bells
And horny pointing fingers of wise clocks
Among the smoke and tangled river-smells
Where Tilbury sprawls along the oily Thames
And ships have gone to sleep and tumult hems
Them in to dream the dark dream of the docks.

VIII

You are right to be so homesick for the towers,
And I am wrong to look too deep within.
This is the season when new things begin,
And turf betrays the finger-prints of flowers.
Tell me, my dear, how to invest the hours.
What shall I see? The copper moon worn thin,
Or a taut ship strung like a violin?
Rain-gilded streets or poplars striped with show-
ers?
*Come with me . . . you must say . . . come along
with me,*
Down by St. Paul's in Paternoster Row,
There is a little shop . . . What can it be?
Old books perhaps? Old prints? Nothing at all
Depending in the least upon St. Paul?
I'll have to ask the pigeons if they know.

IX

Quickly before the broken wave falls down
Show me the world blown like a moth through
space,
Yet share with me the drama of a place,
Let me not lose you: share with me the town . . .
Bridges and primrose-market and the frown
Where houses doubt the spring, and ruffled lace
Of April leaves, their shadows on your face . . .
Quickly before the falling wave can drown

All leaves and flowers and every day and night
We two have known and music and the pang
When music stops. I need to be concrete
Even with illusion, need to invent delight;
And liked the blackbird first because he sang
The number on a door in Cockspur Street.
And no waves to tend.

X

Some instant aspect of an immortal thing
I'll give you since you do not want the whole.
The live will in the flesh, the pulsing soul
Is mutable past all imagining.
It shines and goes: it is the irised wing
Of the flying fish: it is the quivering bowl
Of the sea-anemone, or the aureole
Of a pearl, or the coral's alabaster spring
Faintly unfurled in leaf on fretted leaf.
It is all and none of these forever the same
And flawed with change forever. Though it be
Mingled a little with the salt of grief
From those deep waters out of which we came,
We were lovers long before there was a sea.
GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.

MENDACITY

TRUTH is love and love is truth,
Either neither in good sooth:
Truth is truth and love is love,
Give us grace to taste thereof.
But if truth offend my sweet
Then I will have none of it,
And if love offend the other,
Farewell truth, I will not bother.

Happy truth when truth accords
With the love in lovers' words!
Harm not truth in any part,
But keep its shadow from love's heart.
Men must love, tho lovers' lies
Outpall the stars in florid skies,
And none may keep, and few can merit,
The fond joy that they inherit.

Who with love at his command
Dare give truth a welcome hand?
Believe it, or believe it not,
'Tis a lore most vainly got.
Truth requites no penny-fee,
Niggard's honey feeds no bee,
Ere this trick of truth undo me
Little love, my love, come to me.

A. E. COPPARD.

HAY HARVEST

IN the circle of noon,
On the last load in,
I cannot cease thinking how very soon
Harvest is on us and over and gone
Almost before we begin.
Only this dawn
The field was troubled alike with waves,
Where late I windrowed the placid sea.
Now half of the field lies nakedly
Under the wind's caves.

All afternoon now
I will be coming back
To load and mow
To the last fugitive shock,
That the mow won't lack
And the door lock;—
Out to this field,
Where the wheels going over
Stone and rut won't let me forget
What a stony yield
Sleep will be bringing me back to yet and yet.

And I can't help thinking
How the ravelling bee
Won't have a place in my mow-stored clover
Lost from his principality,
That I feed out through the wintry cover.

And the sun will be sinking
And I'll like as not
Halt the team by the last haycock,
To marvel at the harvest I have got.
Sleep will be what I will mostly want.
But I'll not dare
To lie down with only the wind to knock
And nobody there.
There'll be a long wagon jaunt
Back to a real enough solid sleep,
And a harvest of more than hay to keep.

So I'll pitch the last doodle on
And rein up my team
And be gone;
Lapsing into some jostling, intransitive dream:
How one dead-branched tree
At the field's far end,
Which should have been cut down these months
ago,
Now catches the red sun's washing gleam,
Like Neptune come out of his evening sea
And no waves to tend.

Last,
There will be,
With the hot toil past,
An horizon for me

That the darkness won't show—
And rest like a friend—
And a long sleep to go.

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING.

AT MELVILLE'S TOMB

OFTEN beneath the wave, wide from this ledge,
The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath
An embassy. Their numbers, as he watched,
Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured.

And wrecks passed without sound of bells,
The calyx of death's bounty giving back
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,
The portent wound in corridors of shells.

Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil,
Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled,
Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars:
And silent answers crept across the stars.

Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive
No farther tides. . . . High in the azure steeps
Monody shall not wake the mariner.
This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.

HART CRANE.

TO LOVERS OF EARTH: FAIR WARNING

GIVE over to high things the fervent thought
You waste on Earth; let down the bar
Against a wayward peace too dearly bought
Upon this pale and passion-frozen star.
Sweethearts and friends, are they not loyal? Far
More fickle, false, perverse, far more unkind
Is Earth to those who give her heart and mind.

And you whose lusty youth her snares intrigue,
Who glory in her seas, swear by her clouds,
With Age, man's foe, Earth is ever in league;
Time resurrects her even while he crowds
Your bloom to dust, and lengthens out your
 shrouds
A day's length or a year's. She will be young
When your last cracked and quivering note is sung.

Her beauty will remain, sufficient still
Though you are gone, and with you that rare loss
That vanishes with your bewildered will.
And there shall flame no red, indignant cross
For you, no sharp white scar of wrath emboss
The sky, no blood drip from a wounded moon,
And not a single star chime out of tune.

COUNTÉE CULLEN.

LIGHT

WHAT lovely meadows have I seen in the Sun,
With their large families of little flowers
Smiling beneath the quiet, peaceful skies:
Let no man trespass on these happy hours,
And think acquaintance waits in my two eyes.

This glorious light that makes the butterfly
Go staggering like a drunkard through the air
Till he lies dazed and panting on a stone—
This light I feel is both my light and fire,
And Love may bleed to death, till it has gone.
W. H. DAVIES.

WHITE PETAL NANITCH

By scarlet mottles through the grass-stems on the
ground,
By blackbirds' new wildness and silence, by pruned
orchards'
White petals on black summer-fallow swept and
strown,
I know plowing is ended. Oh, on wind-whitened
sands
Budded-alder shadows, out of the deep river green
light.
And men whose work here is ended, men I know,
Plow-hands that I worked with when I was young
and sound,
Lounge waiting for the plow-hands' boat, and to be
gone.
John Meeker, big and red-haired and afraid of
horses
When they squeal in the dark. Thomas Hines,
deaf, a face
Of bunched muscles that a man tightens when he
hardly hears,
Cupping his ear forward, watchful; dull-tongued
and tall.
And Gideon Jones, a light-eyed Welshman, whose
speech
Was warm and soft-syllabled, sensitive to the
courses

Of his arteries. Abner, a youth, silent; a grown
youth secretly

Measuring each man, the incompleteness of each.

Steve, a short-bodied Russian who said:

“While we wait,

A green oak stands beside the Caspian Sea.

Fastened to the oak is a thin silver chain.

Picketed to the chain a cat whiter than a dime

Circles and reverses, pacing round that tree.

Winding to the left, he sings fit to break a bird's
heart.

And he tells stories, unwinding . . . all the things
you've seen.

Things that were worthless, or that happened to
your shame,

Or, coming when you mourned, seemed little at
that time,

Break loose from the wall of your body, rock and
start

As these loose petals from the ground when the
wind takes aim

Mount into a white nanitch, color and supply the
wind

And whip the rock beaches.

“So those things you've lived

Come out of the men listening, and shine as they
depart.”

And big John Meeker said:

“Then into that nanitch

I'd feed all I've lived like grass-seed, but one thing.
When I was a young man . . .

“That was where summer was.
That was where summer reached into me till I be-
lieved

It steeped out my strength like vinegar will bone.
The sun the floating mother, the sun like lye to
eat,

Burnt through a man's brain, and nothing was but
light.

What were words in that land? The grass crum-
bled like chalk.

The black rocks cracked open. Touch them, they'd
sear your hand

Like iron sledged to a gray heat. It was a sledge-
hammer

That hammered in light and hammered. . . .

“Well. In the dark
I walked to the niggers' bunk-house, and because
the niggers

Kept silent because one of them was hurt, because
in the night

The sky was not a burden on me, and I heard clods
Crumble in the gullies as in summer when I was
young,

And grass move again, and prickles, it almost
seemed

I could touch my old life of pity and of being kind,
And be as I had played, with men as I had
dreamed.

“And I did not, I would not shut summer out of my
mind.

. . . A black man lay hurt in the bunk-house. He
lay straight

Under the dripping lamps and faces; and when he
breathed

His white rib-bones bent, skinned naked. I saw
terror

And not envy of life; innocence of death and not
fear;

Pain held him too hard and proud, and too intent
To notice the black men who watched and
staunched his blood

That puddled in the bed-straw. Too intent to hear
The niggers, that crowded above his face, talk loud,
Because they were ashamed of their nakedness, of
black scurf

Patched on their black chests and bellies, being
seen.

They feared that I had seen the nakedness of their
minds.

With words they covered and denied it, all that
crowd.

“The man dying, the hurt nigger, kept manhood. I
say he reached,

Guided by his pain, to greatness. O dead man,
proud

Over all their faces that pretended and that were
afraid!—

When courage among men has failed me, when I
 have seen
The kind spirits I knew when I was young burn off
 at dawn
Uncovering my nakedness to many eyes and to my
 own,
Through you, held steadfast among cowards by a
 wound,
I have seen beyond fear and beyond flinching, how
 from pain
I shall build my own greatness, and not notice light
 or sound,
But bring summer to waste and silence, and bring
 peace.”

And Gideon Jones said:

 “How would you, with a mind like mine?
I gandered near Blalock, where the black cliffs shine
Like agate because the wind polishes them down
 with sand
And searches your gullet with river-spray hard as
 brine.
The Greeks at work had to lean slantwise on the
 wind.
Our rotten ties, piled and burning, drew flocks of
 crows.
If crows should come low to this river and give us
 a look,
I would smell that spray now, again that damp
 whitish smoke,

And taste the Greeks' garlic. . . .

 "A freight-train rum-dummed past,
And, when the block fell, we found a man lying in
 the grass,

Small, papoose-faced, tiny-handed. Like a yellow
 pear

Lost out of a market-wagon. When we spoke
He rubbed tie-smoke into the palms of his little
 hands

And sipped it with his wet mouth, and saw us not.
He ate our bread as if he'd found it. He worked
 with the Greeks,

And talked with them, in his spagnolo, for two
 weeks.

. . . Only to the Greeks, mind you, never to me
Though I could speak his lingo.

 "Have you been alone
And walked spraddled, or carrying your arms stiff,
 to shape your shadow,

Acting, to change the shape it falls in? If on bare
 ground,

It falls dull-edged, black like a place soaked with
 water,

Brittle, restive like a bird. If on this sand,
You cast smooth, even your fingers cast and obey
 your will.

If on unpastured grass roughened with wild sun-
 flower blades,

You'll see it lengthen and contract according to the
 wind,

To keep her mind from me. . . . I imagined that
 we lay there dead
As I have seen Spanish statues on their tomb
Accounting their past days and nights of life no
 more
Than crows that gang to a dead horse. I valued
 mine,
And this day among them, and those to come, nothing.

 “When dawn
Lit that yellow room, I had slept, and she was
 gone.”

And Abner, the grown youth, leaned forward, his
 quick voice
Hurried to be done before the night, or lest we
 speak,
Or lest we remember an incident and explain his
 words
By some hurt that he kept secret:

 “Listen now,
Listen now. This is not something that I have
 read.
I have had a life separate also, and while we
 worked
I lived and experienced and learned something
 that concerns you all.
You have come to this country how many plowing
 times?

But how many have you stayed till the wild-cherry
bloom
Burnt, or the grain stooled or pollened? You have
seen black fields
And streaked grasses, and fruit-petals on the
ground, but not their end.
And neither have you seen your own bodies. You
look at your hands,
But what color is your flesh, and what nature? I
know
Our flesh, that covers each of us like a wombed
child,
Is eager to be dead. I know that, I have that to
say.
That mother wholly desires only to be dead.
Did you think that she enjoyed you, and liked to
obey your mind?
No more than a woman long unnoticed, who has
invented
A child's game to keep down and kill the pain of
her youth,
Shall hang to the poor game she played with, with
on her mouth
The sweet she had never dared imagine.

“The new sweet, death.

“Which of you declared pain a greatness? Here
is pain
More than any wound furnishes, a more command-
ing voice

Than any you have feared, than anything has that
draws breath.

How can you take account whether you be kind
Or terrible to any other man, having to prove
The contempt of your flesh, that prefers death to
your mind?

“And to be brave against death is manhood denied.
It is to be cuckolded and to give consent.
To be shamed publicly and to music by your own
head.

. . . Dark, dear, treacherous, cunning to lull me,
diligent

To enact my mind’s lover, how when you fasten
upon death,

Upon death your bridegroom, death your lover and
your friend?

How much shall you then court me? How can I
enjoy you blind?

. . . Where’s old man Reinhart’s right arm, and
his thin hand

After the threshing machine caught them? Has
any man listened

Under the black wire-grass to hear how they met
the earth?

You have seen his fixed eyes. He listened, and that
mirth

Is in his mind always. His mouth shakes.

“Cowardice at death
Is to cry over the coupled lovers, and to protest

And imagine they'll forbear coupling and be
ashamed,
Hearing a man's voice bear witness. . . . Save
your breath.
This knowledge I press into my forehead, I would
mark the bone.
I prepare myself incessantly, day and night.
I would say at my death 'Look, I marked this when
I lived.
Do not laugh over me, or think that I have been
deceived.
I was never deceived. I turned all my mind and
might
Not to be so beyond anyone second, and I had no
rest.
When the new bunch-grass—when riding in the
bare fields
That see the green river in the wind bud endless
white—
Tempted me to exult, I could find no way to
yield.' ”

H. L. DAVIS.

JOHN

W'EN de Lawd chose his 'ciples Peter wuz de fus',
Den he pick up Andrew too;
Jeems an' John wuz a-settin' close by,
An' he says to 'em, "I needs you."
Philip an' 'Tholomew he done call,
An' de Jeems dat wuz Alph'us' son,
Oh, dey wuz de goodes' men dere wuz—
But John wuz de likeliest one.

*Oh, de Lawd love John de bes' of all,
John wuz de likeliest one.*

Peter wuz heavy-built, Andrew wuz spar',
An' Jeems wuz in between.
Matthew wuz de one dat carried mos' weight,
Philip wuz good an' lean.
Oh, Thomas had a straight back, Jude he wuz tall,
Dey wuz good ter look upon;
But John wuz jes' like a picter in a book,
John wuz de likeliest one.

*Oh, de Lawd love John de bes' of all,
John wuz de likeliest one.*

Peter wuz de rock fo' ter buil' de church,
Andrew wuz one of de beams,
Matthew an' 'Tholomew dey wuz j'ists,
So wuz Philip an' Jeems.

Thomas an' Simon an' Jude wuz de walls,
An' de seats fo' ter set upon,
But John wuz de winder what de light come in,
John wuz de likeliest one.

*Oh, de Lawd love John de bes' of all,
John wuz de likeliest one.*

JULIA JOHNSON DAVIS.

ANY BOY TO HIS FIRST LOVE

My dear, you will remember this
When some new lover leans to kiss
The lips that vowed by star and tree
Never to turn away from me.
You will remember that strange time
When our new love began to climb
And took the stars by force and sang
Till all the heaven around us rang.
You will remember, but not tell,
How this delight of ours befell,
And how incredulous we were
That love could wither in a year,
Or lips so brave as ours find breath
To cry a truce to aught save Death.
You will not tell a word of this
Most miserable cowardice
That might proclaim how life belies
The promises in Beauty's eyes.
But he will kiss your eyes and hair
And see your face and find you fair
Till Lethe flows through breast and limb
And you forget me, loving him.

EDWARD DAVISON.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

At last the cygnet, preening his plumed snow,
Wins the midstream. Mark his new beauty well!
Erect, uplit he sails; in the clear flow
 Reflected, breast and wing
 And proud beak winnowing
The April air, all curved like a sea shell.

Out of deformity he grew to this
Divinest form, burgeoning on the stream,
A living water-flower. He scorned the hiss
 And cackle in those ranks
 That watched him from the banks;
He knew what seed he was: he had his dream.

And the dream raised the seed and molded him
In its own secret image, secretly:
Refashioned him, curved serpentine and slim
 That delicate white neck
 Feathered without a fleck,
Taught him his poise, shaped him the thing you see.

O Thou that shepherdest the waddling geese
Upon the flowery banks of Helicon,
Bid the hoarse gabble, the upbraiding cease,
 And guide thy flock to see
 How lonely and leisurely
Sails on this sunny river the young swan.

EDWARD DAVISON.

ANIMULA VAGULA

AFTERNOON edges toward evening
Like a tired stallion,
Snuffing the yellow grain that the road spreads
Before the bin of sunset.
But I, the rider,
Must slip from the saddle only to mount again.
The moon will fur with light all the great heads
Of night's twelve horses
Galloping under me,
Before I come
To what awaits me—
And that will not be home.
Travelers, heavily sleeping in strange beds,
Hearing in sleep the whistling groan of a mare
In labor,
I am one
Of your sad company.
And when you rise and miss a horse to ride,
And crouch over your sore bodies,
And curse
Because you cannot journey further, I
Shall nurse my wounds with you—
I shall be there.

BABETTE DEUTSCH.

NOW THE SKY

How long have standing men—by such a stone
As this I watch from on this windless night—
Beheld Arcturus, golden and alone,
Guiding Antares and the Snake aright.

The Scales were up when not an Arab walked
On sand that soon was paved with names of stars;
Boötes herded, and the Giant stalked
Past the curved Dragon, contemplating wars.

How many an open eye, bedight with dew,
Over the sleeping flowers has drawn them down—
Andromeda, and Berenice's few
Dim tresses that shall ever flee the Crown.

From such a rock whence graybeards long ago,
Forgetting it beneath them, heard the Lyre,
I watch. But there is something now we know
Confusing all they saw with misty fire.

For them a hundred pictures on a slate.
For us no slate, and not a hand that draws.
For them a pasture-dome wherefrom the gate
Of Cancer led the Lion through its claws;

For them a frosty window, painted over,
Nightly, with flower faces in a ring—
Daisies dancing up, and clouds of clover
Scenting the after way, and phlox to fling

Thin petals left and right till morning lifted.
For us no shapely flame in all the dark;
For us a million embers that have drifted
Since the first fire, and not a sign to mark

Where anything shall end, or which shall go
With which until they both shall die to gray.
For watchers once a changeless face to know;
For us cold eyes that turn henceforth away.

They saw each constellation take its hour
Of triumph overhead, before it started
Down the broad West, whereon the death of power
Was written by the Ram, and nightly charted.

The Eagle and the Swan, that sailed so long,
Floating upon white wings the Arrow missed,
Tilted at midnight, plunging with a song
Earthward, and—as they sank—deep Hydra hissed.

Leo had long been growling in his lair
When Pegasus neighed softly in the East,
Rising upon a wind that blew his hair
Freshly, until Aquarius increased

The stream he aimed against the Fish's mouth,
And all the stars were wet with silent rain.
The Hyades came weeping, and the South
Sent mist to soothe the Sisters in their pain.

These things they witnessed, and Orion, climbing
Fiercely with those two Dogs announcing Fall;
Then Winter, with Aldebaran loud-chiming,
Baiting the frozen Bull, that turned to call

The Bears to warm his anger. These they knew
And knew the seasons with them, Spring and
Spring—

Counting the dozen Signs the finger drew
That swung the inconstant Sun around the Ring.

Slow Jupiter proceeded as they planned,
Lingering among the Twelve in stately turn;
They touched the breasts of Venus where the hand
Of Mars's fiery love had been to burn.

The sky was then a room, with people going
Faithfully to and fro, and beasts enchained.
The sky was then a midnight wastrel, throwing
Riches away; and still the purse remained.

But now the sky is broken, door by door.
Strangers in the room obscure the hosts.
The meadow is not guarded any more
By watchers coming lonely to their posts.

The animals are never to be named
That swarm beyond our company of old—
Stragglers from the herd, that we had tamed
Unknowing the recesses of the fold.

Those were no heroes whom we once addressed—
Hercules, Orion, and the Twins.
Unwounded, they were running from the rest
Far there where only now the war begins.

There is a game for players still to play,
Pretending that the board was never lost.
But still the painted counters will decay,
And knowledge sit alone to count the cost.

MARK VAN DOREN.

WANG PENG, FAMOUS SOCIOLOGIST,
SUGGESTS TO THE EMPEROR THE
ONLY POSSIBLE MEANS OF IM-
PROVING THE PEOPLE OF
THE EMPIRE

HAVING read the inscriptions
Upon the tombstones
Of the Great and the Little Cemeteries,
Wang Peng advised the Emperor
To kill all the living
And resurrect the dead.

PAUL ELDRIDGE.

THIS FOREMAN

"WHAT did you see when the girders rose?"

"A house of steel, a net."

"What else?"

"Men in their working clothes,
Men with their foreheads wet;
I saw them sway on the high steel beams,
But I knew their heads were wet."

"Did you see a workman slip and fall dead?"

"I saw one leave the steel;

I heard what some of the others said,
And I saw the swallows wheel
Round the foreman with the twisted head,
Whose foot was half a heel."

"When the man fell, what did this foreman do?"

"He sang, he sang like a swan
Of how two naked lovers loved
In a cage of steel till dawn;
He sang—and his mouth was a slit of dark—
Of a sword that could be drawn."

"You say you heard this foreman *sing*?"

"I heard him sing like a swan."

"You say this foreman stopped to *sing*
When a man had fallen down?
(*He says he heard this foreman sing*
Like a swan when a man fell down.)"

"You heard this foreman testify?"

"I heard each word he said."

"Now briefly what did the witness say?"

"He said when the man fell dead,
He slid like a flash to the dead man's side
And gave the dead first aid."

"All right, now what did this foreman do?"

"I heard him sing like a swan
About two naked lovers trapped
In a web of steel till dawn."

"You swear to God you heard him *sing*?"

"By God, that man's the one."

"Court please, I'll ask the witness more,

Court please, I wish to show,

Court please, the witness on the stand,

Court please, is trying to

Make light of what he saw and mock

The State, Court please, and you."

"Do you affirm that this foreman *sang*?"

"I affirm that he's the one."

Now the bailiff hammers a terrible din,
But nobody shouts: Tin, tin, come in!
Because they all stare at the foreman instead,
Who licks the slit in his crooked head.

"You stayed there after twilight came?"

"The twilight did not come;
The steel net shone like a russet flame
At the touch of the watchman's thumb;
The men went home and the watchman walked
His rounds slowly and dumb."

"All right, the twilight did not come;
You stayed, what happened then?"

"I saw the foreman stealing back,
He climbed to the top again,
He moved in the misty girder net
And he sang like many men."

"Court please, I'll ask the witness more:
What did this foreman sing?"

"He sang the strength of steel and steel
In days past measuring;
He tapped the beams with a monkey wrench;
I could feel the high crane ring."

"You're sure it was a monkey wrench?"

"He sang of a snare for love;
He called to the silver hounds of love
In the wooded moon above,
And I heard him cry 'The hounds are dead,
What am I dreaming of?'"

"Go on, you heard this foreman sing?"

"I heard him sing like a ghost,

How a man gone down was a man to lead
The van of a falling host:

‘Let my green steel stiffen in the frost
To snare what men love most!’ ”

“What men love most? He sang of that?”

“I did not understand,
For he sang of the living lives of men
As if the steel had spanned
Their lives with something true and cold
That nobody had planned.

“Did your family know that you were there?”

“Your honor, I object!”

“Sustained!”

“That’s all.”

“Go down the hall to the last door and collect
Your fee . . . the last door on the right.”

“Poor chap, his mind is wrecked.”

Two figures loitered down the hall,
And each signed for its fee.

“I could not understand your song,
Explain the hounds to me.”

“Not here, fool! Climb the steel tonight,
The moon goes down at three!”

THOMAS HORNSBY FERRIL.

LINES FROM "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD"

Stony and grey, and agelessly old and chill,
He sits who craves no part in human will:

Unspeaking and unwearied, stirring not,
The single living force time has forgot.

About him rage ten billion suns. Their eyes
Blaze on him, but he looks without surprise;

Watching their shapes before him shift and run,
And caring not what is undone or done.

For weary, idle, very old and stale
To him is now creation's endless tale.

And naught within it all can he now see,
Its infinite naught but vacuity.

All is but shapeless dust his feet have trod,
In vain upstirring it. Not any God

As equal to himself he found; again
He has sought here and there, but all in vain.

Vain, idle, useless; neither in heaven nor hell
Nor in mankind's dumb longing can he dwell:

Only within the void. Withdrawn behind
The veil of time can he rest now resigned.

Sometimes the fall of a lost star through night
He sees, but does not alter his fixed sight.

Sometimes a world explodes, and people shriek
As they are torn to bits. He does not speak.

Sometimes a new star-cluster swift expands
Out of dead dust dark whirled. He does not move
his hands.

Only from age to age across that face,
Vast, stony, lifeless, without any trace

Of hope or struggle, slowly falls a tear
And slides down cheek and chin till it drops clear

Into the abyss of nothingness. And no spot
Of space receives it. 'Tis as if it were not.

And still he does not move. And still he sees,
Out of the darkness crawling, new eternities

Which ebb and flow, though still his dark heart
dreams
That all those tears, which have fallen down in
streams

From his eyes since the birth of time, have grown
An endless ocean, serene, still, alone,

Whose brackish waters quench the failing power
Of the far stars; and rising, hour by hour,

Will conquer worlds of ice and flame and men,
And when the last has sunken, then, oh then,

Brooding on that still ocean will he be
Alone at last to all eternity.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER.

FOR THEM THE NIGHT

SOMEWHERE the lovers are for whom this night
Dares to return—not here beneath low trees,
Nor slipping past the hedges, gray on white.
Not for the casual vow these lifting seas
Of luminous pallor washing earth away,
The flight of blossoms up the bending sky;
Oh, not for little lovers this faint play
Of satin-fingered winds that fold and pry!

But for the two—the two who shall draw near,
Leaving what ruin behind, what burning ships!
Two, strangely led, lost to remembrance, fear—
Madness within their eyes and on their lips.
For them the night—for them the moon in red,
And beauty walking softly with the dead.

HORTENSE FLEXNER.

SPRING ODE

I

WHITE on its branches
And again!
The spring has brought
The double-flowering cherry
To its beauty;
And you too with the spring
Have blossomed:
And both are fruitless.

II

Along the river tracks
Have rearisen
The daffodils and white narcissi
With the golden eyes
Of pheasants;
And shall we too, like them,
Wither
Down to the grass,
And, unlike them,
Be absent
When the spring calls
In the year to come?

III

You can find me in the clouds,
In the hills, in the winds, in the waters;

You can see me in the flowers,
And hear me in the songs of birds.
Wherever there is beauty is your delight,
And there am I for you and with you.
Is there then any need of me,
Of my tired and twisted face,
Is my body or my mind
Of use to you?
When you can love me without them,—
Not me
But the notion of me?
When with this you can go your ways,
Happy that all beautiful things
Mean your love
And your love means all these?

F. S. FLINT.

LIGHT

ALTHOUGH the incandescent filament
Glow steadily in the bulb, and all is bright
About them in the room, and snug content
Seems theirs as by the cosy hearth they sit—
With eyes that watch his wife so calmly knit
In the serene cold glow, he hankers still
For the old happy times when all love's light
Was only a gusty lanthorn in the night,
As they together climbed the Plover Hill.

WILFRID GIBSON.

THE INTRUDER

SHE twisted her slim soul about
The bars I made to keep her out,

And wriggled in at last to find
An unused corner of my mind,

A bare cold corner, a poor bed,
And no pillow for her head.

Yet she was glad, and blithe to be
Even as close as this to me.

A scrawny soul, a beggar born
I could not love and would not scorn,

She hung about for weeks, she smiled
At chiding like a roguish child;

She ventured slowly, pushed her way
Farther in from day to day,

With idle talk, admiring glances,
And unnoticed small advances,

Until at last she gained my bed,
And a warm pillow for her head.

Good God forgive her. Now she twists
My proud soul in her careless fists,

And crowds the bed, and fills my chair
With disingenuous underwear.

Torn with rage I go to find
Some rathole corner of my mind

Where I may rest in peace, nor feel
Those slight esurient fingers steal.

WARREN GILBERT.

VAMPIRE

*SHE trembled as you touched the strings—
Oh, she was white; oh, she was mute . . . !*
For her delight bright Zamiel sings
To scarlet horn and brazen flute.

*She, flouted, broken by taunt and slander,
Bitterly did herself to death;*
Now lamia, ghoul, and salamander
Obey her lightest breath.

You are but ash on the wind to her,
You whom she set her heart upon;
For she has looked on Lucifer,
And she has loved Apollyon.

So—you seem haggard now, and white!
What will the leeches say to this?
She'll be a rose aflame tonight
Under Asmodeus' kiss!

To her it matters not at all
Into whose grave they drive a stake,
Throned in the rhadamanthine hall
Beside the Eternal Snake.

ELLEN GLINES.

FINIS

THE first time you killed me
Of course I felt the pain,
But I thought it was an accident
And came to life again.

The second time you killed me
You took wheel and rack . . .
I lived all day, until the sun
Went down green and black.

The third time you killed me
I laughed along thin air,
Kicked on the golden slippers,
Danced up the golden stair.

ELLEN GLIMES.

FOR ALL OUR SAKES

For all our sakes we seem
Each of another place.
For all our sakes we have
Each his unnatural face
And behind eyes pretend
Never to understand
Behind eyes.

And seeming each another
And of another place, to spare
All from all, makes each more same,
Makes each one no one, nowhere,
Makes separate blindness
To see estrangement, for kindness,
For all our sakes.

LAURA RIDING [GOTTSCHALK].

BOOTS AND BED

HERE in this wavering body, now brisk now dead,
Rules the long struggle between boots and bed,
Empiric boots distrusting all that seems
And quietistic bed, my ship of dreams.
Each laid a wager in my infancy
Himself would have me when I came to die,
And still the stakes are raised as I appear
More stalwart or more sickly, year by year;
Until I lie afield and keep my toes
Naked and nimble as a monkey goes.
Yet, something always baulking this evasion,
Glass under foot or frost or irritation
Of gnats and midges in the summer hay,
Once more begins my accustomed day-to-day
With pride of boots, and closes in delight
Of ghoulish bed gloating "perhaps to-night"
So nothing's left but to dull-weary them
And out-Gethusalem Gethusalem.

ROBERT GRAVES.

THE TAINT

BEING born of a dishonest mother
Who knew one thing and thought the other,
A father too whose golden touch
Was "think small, please all, compass much,"
I am hard put to it to unwind
The early swaddlings of my mind.

Agree, it is better to confess
The occasion of my rottenness
Than in a desperation try
To cloak, dismiss, or justify
The inward taint: of which I knew
Not much until I came to you
And saw it then, furred on the bone,
With as much horror as your own.

You were born clean; and for the sake
Of your strict eyes I undertake
(If such disunion be allowed
To speak a sentence, to go proud
Among the miseries of to-day)
No more to let mere sweetness weigh
As counterbalance in my mind
To being rotten-boned and blind,
Nor to leave honesty and love
In both only for you to prove.

ROBERT GRAVES.

EPITAPH ON A SAILOR

To that wind-blown, salt-bitten soul of his,
All ports were merely ends for voyages,
The stars were set as guides for such as he
And Earth was but a cup to hold the sea.

ARTHUR GUITERMAN.

VACANT LOTS

THE city charts, white-veined on crackling blue,
Named it a "vacant lot,"—that was not true
Whatever else they said. For who could pass
Such gracious trees, or touch cool-fingered grass,
Breathe in the pulsing fragrance of it all
From tiptoeing Spring on through the flaming Fall,
Feel wings stir arching branches overhead
And still deny the place was tenanted?

Hoarse-voiced the builders came, with jangling
chains,
Trees crashed to earth, dark sweating men dug
drains,
Stripped sod, gouged pits, poured clattering
streams of bricks,
Set up in naked rows their ugly sticks,
Made boxes to imprison beds and chairs
And phonographs and arguments and cares:
Now, whether they admit the truth or not
On those blue charts, it is a vacant lot.

MOLLY ANDERSON HALEY.

PILGRIM TOWER

ONCE on a windy day
I and my lover
Mounted a tower of stone
And then looked over.

Up the dark flights we ran,
Kissed at each rest,
High at the top we met
Wind from the west.

Down on the earth we saw
Chimneys and trees,
Graveyards and little men,
Ships on the seas.

ANN HAMILTON.

FARM-WIFE

SHE never climbed a mountain,
She never heard the sea,
But always watched a winding road
That wandered aimlessly
Among unshaded meadows—
A farm, a pasture rife
With black-eyed Susans, level fields
Comprised her little life.

She never longed to travel,
She felt no urge to search,
Her longest journey the five miles
On Sundays to the church;
Yet, to her quiet dwelling,
In singing, sighing flow,
Came love and parting, birth and death,
And all that women know.

JOHN HANLON.

THE FAIR OF MAAM

PURSuing my love's wild heart
From rumours through many a fair,
I roved under miles of pinewoods
Through days of green dusk air;
To meet the fair day at Maam,
To gather sly rumours of her,
I took the pinewoods for my bed
And slept until dawn made a stir.

The stir of heifers and young bulls
Had hoofed soil under the pine,
Through fresh woods smelling of cattle,
Through dawn airs, moistured and fine;
And I, at a heel of soft herds
Stepped from the heavy air
To a green square, gabled with pinewoods—
The fair-green of Maam fair.

All day in the slapping of bargains
I sought for word of my love;
And what had crowded my hearing,
But loud strokes herding each drove,
Horns buckling by bullocks unnozzled;
Strong words of praise or blame
Were heard from sly ass dealers—
But never my love's name!

And evening crowded the pinewoods
When all but my love were seen;

For hearing a reel of fife music
Rise on the loose fair-green,
Girls hurried from under green timbers
To dancers grown lively in ale,
To match-makers, by the bone-fire
That welded the female to male.

Then leaving the fair-green of Maam
The ballad-men sang my love,
Until the glens whispered her name
That hill voices whispered above;
The pools of sunrise had not wet her,
So I crept where the moonlight creeps
To look on the unknown mountains
And plunder their blue deeps.

I've lost her, O loved one, O strange one,
O hunger none other can ease;
Crossroads of the Black Bull deceived me
Courtyards by the eastern seas;
Grown peevish, I'm beggared in Maam,
Its woods are all gone and its fair
Is a memory left to the old men
Who tether a few goats there.

F. R. HIGGINS.

PORTRAIT

QUICK with your paints and palette there! the color
Ebbs from my languid arteries. Oh, be quick!
I feel my hair grow grey, my eyes grow duller,
And all the youthful contour blurred and thick.
I hear your nervous brushes rub and click,
Racing with time to catch my brief reflection.
Keenly I hear the numbered minutes tick,
Outdistancing your patience for perfection.

Can you retrace the masque of life, the section
Of universal chaos that was I?
The scars of flame, the gleams of resurrection
From loves that wither into lusts that die?
O then be quick! before these vanish hence,
Leaving a shell of blank indifference.

ROBERT HILLYER.

FOREST

WHEN the changed air drenched earth with rain
And startled creatures swam or died,
There was no thought, in any brain,
Of man, who had not then been tried.
And now that one, in this cool wood,
Stands where old ice and water stood—
Among these creatures, on this moss,
Mute in his mantling sense of loss—
Nothing remembers, nothing sees
The humble heart that he has lost.
He is forgotten by the trees
That only knew him to their cost.
He that, for power and a crown,
Betrayed and brought the pine-tree down
And turned to stone the dropped leaf's green
For wit to parry the unseen,
Hears voices in the speechless trees
And speeches ringing in the ground,
And cries, not understanding these,
And suffers, hating other sound.

RAYMOND HOLDEN.

SONNET

SEEING you straight and tall and finely molded,
White as that pallor from which lilies pare
The green husk of their bodies; seeing your hair
Like gathered wisps of wind not bound nor folded
By any but their proper darknesses;
Seeing your hands, your forehead and your eyes,
I know that I could touch you and be wise
Beyond all want of other loves than these.
Yet all these elements are shadows only,
Over the being's water, of a flight
Of sea-bird woman, delicate and lonely,
Carrying a breath, a wit, a circling light,
A flash of colored mind from sea to star
In search of islands where no islands are.

RAYMOND HOLDEN.

BEALE STREET LOVE

LOVE

is a brown man's fist
with hard knuckles . . .
blackening the eyes,
crushing the lips.
Hit me again,
says Clorinda.

LANGSTON HUGHES.

RED ROSES

I'm waitin' for de springtime
When de tulips grow—
Sweet, sweet springtime
When de tulips grow;
Cause if I'd die in de winter
They'd bury me under snow.

Un'neath de snow, Lawd,
Oh, what would I do?
Un'neath de snow,
I say what would I do?
It's bad enough to die but
I don't want freezin' too.

I'm waitin' for de springtime
An' de roses red,
Waitin' for de springtime
When de roses red
'Ll make a nice coverin'
Fer a gal that's dead.

LANGSTON HUGHES.

TO MAN'S LIFE

HORRIBLE life, full of pit-falls and degeneracy,
For every heart we soothe, we break one;
Profligate Man! Beholding thee
I see beauty in snakes, and divinity in a dog.
ED. J. IRVINE.

LOVE DWINDLING

OH! what is left when love does tire?
Dead ashes of a living fire!—
No gulf can cause our lives to part,
And break my heart, and break my heart;

A ray of light is hard to find
When life and love are black and blind;
This world-worn weary soul of mine
Is only thine, yes! only thine.

ED. J. IRVINE.

ASHES OF INCENSE

OH, meet me in a labyrinth of dream,
There, through tall twilit shadows take my hand,
Where watery-jewels of pure spirit gleam,
And passion burns not beauty with a brand.

Bowed by an endless ennui of earth,
Give me the soul that breathes through everything!
Some beauteous, scintillating, scarlet birth,
Like a dawn-destined lark at dusk of spring.

ED. J. IRVINE.

PRELUDE

I DREW solitude over me, on the lone shore,
By the hawk-perch stones; the hawks and the gulls
are never breakers of solitude.

When the animals Christ is rumored to have died
for drew in,

The land thickening, drew in about me, I planted
trees eastward, and the ocean

Secured the West with the quietness of thunder. I
was quiet.

Imagination, the traitor of the mind, has taken my
solitude and slain it.

No peace but many companions; the hateful-eyed
And human-bodied are all about me: you that
love multitude may have them.

But why should I make fables again? There are
many

Tellers of tales to delight women and the people.
I have no vacation. The old rock under the house,
the hills with their hard roots and the ocean
hearted

With sacred quietness from here to Asia

Make me ashamed to speak of the active little bod-
ies, the coupling bodies, the misty brainfuls

Of perplexed passion. Humanity is needless.

I said, "Humanity is the start of the race, the gate
to break away from, the coal to kindle,

The blind mask crying to be slit with eye-holes."

Well now it is done, the mask slit, the rag burnt,
the starting-post left behind: but not in a
fable.

Culture's outlived, art's root-cut, discovery's
The way to walk in. Only remains to invent the
language to tell it. Match-ends of burnt ex-
perience,

Human enough to be understood,
Scraps and metaphors will serve. The wine was a
little too strong for the new wine-skins. . . .

ROBINSON JEFFERS.

MOONLIGHT

A NIGHT like this makes me your fool again,
A fool who breaks his heart to be alone.
Its poignancy is much too kin to pain,
And that old passion that my wits disown.

Strange that a shaft of silly silver light
Should set at naught the harsh enlightened years,
Should make me hunger for the old delight
And know again a boy's hot hopeless tears!

Why should I ache for you because a moon
Has turned the world to silver phantasy?
Oh, I am beauty's fool! You know, at noon
You may be damned, my dear, for all of me.

CECIL JOHN.

GO DOWN, DEATH!

A FUNERAL SERMON

WEEP not, weep not,
She is not dead;
She's resting in the bosom of Jesus.
Heart-broken husband—weep no more;
Grief-stricken son—weep no more;
Left-lonesome daughter—weep no more;
She's only just gone home.

Day before yesterday morning,
God was looking down from His great, high Heaven,
Looking down on all His children,
And His eye fell on Sister Caroline,
Tossing on her bed of pain.
And God's big heart was touched with pity,
With the everlasting pity.

And God sat back on His throne,
And He commanded that tall, bright angel stand-
ing at His right hand,
Call me Death!
And that tall, bright angel cried in a voice
That broke like a clap of thunder,
Call Death! Call Death!
And the echo sounded down the streets of Heaven
Till it reached away back to that shadowy place
Where Death waits with his pale, white horses.

And Death heard the summons,
And he leaped on his fastest horse,
Pale as a sheet in the moonlight.
Up the golden street Death galloped,
And the hoofs of his horse struck fire from the gold,
But they didn't make no sound.
Up Death rode to the great, white throne,
And waited for God's command.

And God said, Go down, Death, go down,
Go down to Savannah, Georgia,
Down in Yamacraw,
And find Sister Caroline.
She's borne the burden and heat of the day,
She's labored long in my vineyard,
And she's tired—
She's weary—
Go down, Death, and bring her to me.

And Death didn't say a word,
But he loosed the reins on his pale, white horse,
And he clamped the spurs to his bloodless sides,
And out and down he rode,
Through Heaven's pearly gates,
Past suns and moons and stars.
On Death rode,
And the foam from his horse was like a comet in
the sky;
On Death rode,
Leaving the lightning's flash behind,
Straight on down he came.

While we were watching round her bed,
She turned her eyes and looked away,
She saw what we couldn't see;
She saw old Death. She saw old Death,
Coming like a falling star.
But Death didn't frighten Sister Caroline;
He looked to her like a welcome friend.
And she whispered to us, I'm going home,
And she smiled and closed her eyes.

And Death took her up like a baby,
And she lay in his icy arms,
But she didn't feel no chill.
And Death began to ride again—
Up beyond the evening star,
Out beyond the morning star,
Into the glittering light of glory,
On to the great white throne.
And there he laid Sister Caroline
On the loving breast of Jesus.

And Jesus took His own hand and wiped away her
tears,
And He smoothed the furrows from her face,
And the angels sang a little song,
And Jesus rocked her in His arms,
And kept a-saying, Take your rest,
Take your rest, take your rest!

Weep not—weep not,
She is not dead;
She's resting in the bosom of Jesus.
JAMES WELDON JOHNSON.

LIGHT SHOES

He fixed his hat Kildare-side on
And drew the door behind;
He danced a step to free his limbs
And tripped it down the wind.
He gave a roar to show his sport
And cried, "My work is done:
Farewell, Mayo, for I'm ready to go
Around the world for fun."

He kissed his girl upon the mouth,
She said, "Your eye is queer
And I'm afraid—O much afraid—
I'm not your only dear."
He said, "My dear, I go from you
That Fortune's kiss be won"—
And away he went and round the world,
Around the world for fun.

He met an old man clear of Cong—
"Good-bye, old man, good-bye"
The old man blinked and what did he do?
Sat down on the road to cry.
The young man whistled and followed the road
Straight in to the morning sun—
"The curse o' the crows on all who fail
To follow the road for fun."

Now here we sit too nice to stir,
 Afraid of the wind and rain,
While they're drinking deep in Santa Cruz
 The health of the King of Spain.
It's little would make me cut my stick
 Tho' my shoes they weigh a ton,
And kiss the girls I love, good-bye,
 And round the world for fun.
PATRICK KELLY.

THE LAMB

CRIMSON and gold, my brother Jan,
The rarest green and the proudest blue,
Here on the palette, my brother Jan,
Is colour and colour spread for you,
And the skilful brush has made them yield
Light and glory upon the field.

I work and I work, my brother Jan,
And I have won for this northern town
As sweet an essence of summer eve
As the south itself has hardly known;
And see how all my worshippers pace
With proper pomp to the holy place!

I work and I work, my brother Jan,
And the calm assembling peoples prove,
Under His high red image there,
The comforting joy of His victor love;
And, Jan, my own warm heart is lost
In Hallelujahs with this host.

T. D. KENDRICK.

SONG OF THE BELOVED

WHAT does she now, whose ways are past my knowing?

What cool, dark lover's arm compels her now?

Does her hair mix with winds, when winds are blowing,

As once it did? Tell me, does she allow

Waves and the foam of waves upon the water

To frame her moving beauty, like a gull?

She, who was nearest to the sea's own daughter,

So coldly beautiful,

Turned with a homing gesture to the sea

Always, and gull wings were a part of her.

The sea beat strongly in the heart of her;

And green waves held her body jealously.

Can she have changed, my lost, my lovely one?

I am too far to know, too proud to learn,

Sitting despondently when day is done,

Watching low clouds along the sky-line burn

And crumple into darkness. Night is here,

Full of the lonely wind, my roving brother.

I only know that she was very dear;

For me there is none other.

Her name was like the trembling of a bell!

Wind from the midnight places, blow to her;

Whisper that one who may not go to her

Wishes her well.

A. K. LAING.

SHEEP HERDERS

You too, of course, have counted sheep
Trying to put yourself to sleep?
If you should ever come to hate
That simple harmless opiate
And ask a subtler one instead,
More potent for a pounding head
Than mere monotony of number,
Try this formula for slumber:

Imagine men who earn their bread
By counting sheep, who for the sake
Of counting sheep must keep awake,
(Lie long and quiet in your bed)
Men who through endless lonely days
Follow the herd from crest to crest,
Yet scarcely dare to drop their gaze,
(Lie long and still) who cannot rest
From seeing sheep, who look across
Whole hills moving as if the moss
Moved on a stone.

Lie still. Suppose
That you yourself were one of those.

Think yourself slowly south and west
Across the night. . . . They will be there,
Mexicans mostly, scattered far
Through Texas, underneath the glow
Of moonlight in New Mexico,

Folded darkly under the shadow
Of mountain peaks in Colorado . . .
Twinkling fires . . . the men and sheep
Huddled among the hills for sleep.

Small wonder if they stare about
At dawn and think the country strange.
So many days they have been out,
So many nights upon the range,
It's easy for the hills to change
Places. When you've looked so long
At sheep, and listened to the song
Of wind filled with the stupid cries
Of sheep, and watched along the sky's
Glimmering rim for sheep you've lost—
You're living in your sleep almost;
You see such things without surprise.

Small wonder if at times the older
Gaunter men stare at a boulder
As if the stone wore wool; or follow
Gray chamisa down a hollow
(Gray bushes that the wind stirred)
As if they'd wandered from the herd.

Small wonder, when they hear the beat
Of warm bells mingling with the bleat
Of lambs so long, long in the heat,
If the bright air becomes alive
And drones with noise, if the loud sun

Sends swarming from its brazen hive
Great luminous bees across the noon.

(They'd never tell you there were bees,
But in a country of no trees,
Where the noon sky's a blazing bell,
You'll understand what a frail shell
Preserves a brain's precarious night
From being shattered by the light.)
Sometimes a stranger on the trail
Will catch them in so deep a drowse,
So stupefied with sheep, they'll rouse
Long after they have heard his hail,
Or hearing, raise bewildered brows.

Shut as they are behind a curtain,
You'll understand why they're uncertain
Whether one man they vaguely eye
Trudging naked toward the sky
Appears before them in broad day,
Or while they're turned some other way.

He passes by without a sound,
Leaving behind him on the ground
Blood of his feet from the sharp stone.
His pale flesh bears the livid mark
Of lashes that have torn the skin.
His bloodshot eyes are deep within.
His bearded face is strangely dark

And meagre, strangely like their own.
They cross themselves when he is gone.

. . . Dusk is a kinder light, and softer.
After they munch their beans and bread
They'd raise their throats in raucous laughter,
Only that all their shouts would seem
Drowned in the enormous stream
Of air that's flying overhead.

They stretch for sleep. . . . But even then,
Even asleep, they can't begin
To ease the drowsiness they're in.
It would take more than human sleep
To ease that drowsiness of sheep.
All night they have to hear the thud
Of tiny hoofbeats in their blood,
All night they have to feel the wool
Crowding softly on the skull,
Pushing it downward, till they wake
Wildly for breath before it break. . . .

They stir uneasy in their bed.
Stars wheel across from range to range,
Covering silently with light
The troubled dreamers down below.
They are as simple and as mad,
They are as fabulous and strange,

As those who kept their flocks by night
On hills of Asia long ago.

Think of them slowly one by one
Till you are wakened by the sun.

MAURICE LESEMANN.

NOW AND THEN

TO A. B.

I USED to think that anything might happen
When the early sun streamed through my window
To spread in widening ripples on my blanket
As a tide rises on a wind-crossed shore-sand
Until it reached my face upon the pillow,
Till I could feel it touch my lips and eyelids
And through my eyelids see the red blood pulsing,
And feel its burning brightness on my forehead,
Till all my hair, and every hair was flaming.
I used to think it lit a strange excitement;
I used to think that anything might happen.

I used to think that anything might happen
When in the dawn I left the tall house sleeping
With blinded windows in the morning sunlight.
The tall house in those fragrant filmy mornings
Wore a queer look of somebody in nightdress
When all the world was up and proud and busy.
The crunching cows slipped through the steaming
grasses,
The horses fretted at the meadow gateway,
And little rabbits skipped upon the lawn plots,
While I ran barefoot through the dew wet rushes.
I used to think a thousand birds were singing;
I used to think that anything might happen.

I do not think that anything might happen
Now when the sun shines through the open window
From a bright sky in early summer mornings
And warmly spreads along my night-tossed blanket.
It seems the touch, the welcome touch of friend-
ship,

Or the accustomed fingers of a servant.
Turning I murmur—Ah! there is the sunshine!
At all events to-day may bring fine weather:
And comfortably lean towards the shadow,
To tempt a little sleep to go on sleeping,
To tempt a little dream to go on dreaming,
To dream again that anything might happen.

EVEREST LEWIN.

THE NARROW BED

THE blanket is rough and cold
Nor any comfort holds,
The wind blows bitterly
Out of a winter sea.

The water is frozen deep
In the iron pot at the door;
The bairn I dreaded sore
Lies stiffly under its sheet—
The clay so little and cold
That moved in my body's mould.

The long night brings no rest,
And what is the use to pray
For the weariness of day.
The milk is cold in my breasts,
They lie like heavy stones.
And I must sleep alone.

No night was long as this,
Nor the bed so cold last year.
The night brought warmth and bliss
When a tall man lay here.
But love is no lasting thing,
And he went with the Spring.

The cold is in every limb,
And my heavy breasts do ache.

My heart is hungry for him,
Or for some other mate;
And I do not think that he
Is lying so lonelily.

Some woman sleeps upon
His arm that is white and strong:
No man would lie alone
With the nights so cold and long.

E. R. R. LINKLATER.

AN EQUATION

A WEAVER with a few strands of silk held softly
in his fingers moves a shuttle
Diligently and at an even pace.
Every device and instrument of the weaver
Is heavy and fragrant with the ointments of time.
The turban, the bronzed skin, the sloping, narrowed
shoulders, the skilfully tapered fingers;
The wistful, expectant eyes of the weaver looking
toward the desert
Become a narrative older and more interesting
Than the narrative of the pyramids themselves.

A slight and supple fabric
Brilliant and pale with color,
Moved into undulations by the drifting wind of the
desert
Is becoming a part of the narrative of the weaver;
Is slowly becoming a part of the narrative of the
weaver, of the sky, of the desert, of the mov-
ing river that is older than the desert, of the
fringed palms, the heat of the sun and of the
pyramids themselves—
The pyramids that have not seen the weaver and
whose eyes have become blind.

Is it peculiar that a bit of cloth falling from the
fingers of a weaver into a pattern of device and
color,

Should contain a weaver and a desert and a sky,
That it should be a river and a people and a des-
tiny—

The gathering of centuries between the fingertips;
That it should exceed the pyramids in interest and
rebuke them;

That it should be hope, defeat and desire?

You will stoop and take the fabric in your fingers.
You will smile and offer a price.

You will estimate and cheapen,
But the fabric itself shall answer you.

Its folds shall fall from your shoulders with the
beauty and grace of a people.

Its light and color shall be about you as an ecstasy.
Its texture shall follow your motions as a lure
But you will not possess it.

You will speak of it to your friends.

Their admiration shall feed you—

But the desert and the river, the fringed palms, the
sun, the moving shuttle, the sloping shoulders
of the weaver, the expectant eyes of the weaver,
are untroubled by the coin of the alien.

They continue their narrative.

HERBERT H. LONGFELLOW.

AS ONE FINDING PEACE

THE secret of the King possesses me
Unutterably.

I am a child to sudden woman grown
Who never yet has known
Invasion so imperious, so complete,
Blindly and madly sweet.

I am a bud to sudden blossom blown,
Intoxicate, replete
With fragrance most divinely not its own.

I am dew thirstily drunk up
Out of dawn's lifted cup.

I am my own impotent, daring self, plunged in a
sea

Ecstatically!

O God, encompass me!

Be infinitely mine to hold, to bound me;
Absorb, consume, encompass and confound me;

Be in me and beneath me and above me;

O Father, love me, love me!

Tremendously be,
Strong God, my sea.

In ultimate joy upon this Lover's breast

I come to rest.

Peace, like a song,

Envelopes me;

Peace, like the night,

Folds me in conscious, beautiful delight.
Never has human love held me in tranquil thrall,
For not to human love does peace belong.
What if I be for the Lord God a wall,
Beauteous as cedar and as cedar strong;
What if I be a door, and sealed to all save Him,
Cunningly joined, guarded by flashing cherubim?
I am a door, a wall, a tower of passionate strength
Around which multitudinously throng
Wild ecstasies, wild joys, unending blisses,
A God's caresses and a Father's kisses.

Presently let this rapture in profounder rapture
cease;
A silver bulwark of wrought silence be,
My Father, since that I am come at length,
Captive and free,
Into Your presence as one finding peace.

SISTER M. MADELEVA.

THE TIDE

THROUGH waves that lift as clear as glass
The little maids dip down and rise,
Black-gowned beneath green water show
Slim breasts and slender thighs.

They laugh, they splash, they glitter, they sing,
Their sleeky heads the sun makes bright,
The waves curl round their small wet throats
In ruffles of green and white.

A hundred years come this July,
The tide will flow now up, now down,
The waves will lift as clear as glass
And all these maids be gone.

Gone from green water all their play,
Gone their shrill voices from the air,
And not a soul will call to mind
How their wet arms were fair.

RUTH MANNING-SANDERS.

FIDELE

AND what can a child do,
A little, poor child,
For a gentle, dead lady,
Who, all the Spring through,
On bright days and shady
Glanced toward me and smiled?

At dawn, through the wicket,
When no one can hear me
I'll creep, and unheeded
Keep her bed by the thicket
Well watered and weeded,
And feel she is near me.

ROBERTA MANSFIELD.

BACCHUS

CADMUS, of Thebes where sprang that Amphion
Who reared the pediment and the peristyle
With lyric music, brought at history's dawn
The alphabet from the Nile:
Whence came all chronicles and song.
And Cadmus fathered that Semele who
Consumed by amorous lightning in the strong
Embrace of Zeus gave Bacchus birth, whereby
Was Bacchus' blood composed of song and fire.
Then as Zeus carried Bacchus in his thigh
So was his womb the flesh and the desire
Of the masculine and overruling god.
But Hera, the woman, raged at Bacchus' birth,
And maddened him, and with divine
Unrest she clothed him, and with dreaming shod.
So he began his wandering in the earth:—
This is the lineage and the spirit of wine.

So hunted by Hera, the spirit feminine,
Bacchus from pirates hired an Asian ship,
And linked his fame and fate to a libertine
And lawless crew; who with no loyal lip
Served Hera, yet unconsciously gave aid
To Hera's hatred. These with heavy ropes
Bound Bacchus to a mast. But Bacchus played
With their perfidious hopes:
First he transformed himself into a lion;
Then he made serpents of the masts and oars,

Venomous as the sting which killed Orion.
Then he sent ivy growing round the hull,
And over the sails; and from the magic shores
Of longed for land he caused the sound of flutes
To blow as memory amid the breeze's lull;
Till madness took the sailors whose attributes
Grown brutish by their crime and Bacchus' wish
Leaped in the sterile sea and turned to fish.

So is it with Bacchus ever and his foes:
Bind him and he becomes a lion; and those
Who bind him turn to serpents, and from fangs
Spit poison, where before the bursting grape
Poured healthful wine. The solemn ivy hangs
Where once were blossoms and the glistening shape
Of fruitful leaves. And those who praise,
And seek for water, find it, but as fish.
Music becomes the sound of viewless flutes
Blown from lost lands, or the broken gibberish
Of weary sailors, or the signs of mutes.
Cadmus the grandsire of the god withdraws
Song and the wisdom of the alphabet;
And men walk in a jungle of tangled roots,
The sprawl of crooked counsels and lawless laws,
Where reptiles foul the sylvan rivulet.

EDGAR LEE MASTERS.

FOUR LADIES

THEY squint above unwieldy, crooked laces
And twitter in a gentle alien tongue;
Beneath dark, spreading combs their leathered
faces

Are futile as the patterns newly strung;
And daily, as their needles link and fashion
So habit fetters them with hook and hinge,
Until the light that rosed the room turns ashen
And four more pantalettes have found a fringe.
No lusts, no dreams distress their spinsterhood—
They have not even memories to shawl—
Placid as nuns that rest in painted wood,
They knit (and do not miss their minds at all)

Till Sunday, when they prop the looking glass
And trot their little, penny sins to mass.

MILDRED PLEW MERRYMAN.

LIVING

SLOW bleak awakening from the morning dream
Brings me in contact with the sudden day.

I am alive—this I.

I let my fingers move along my body.

Realisation warns them, and my nerves

Prepare their rapid messages and signals.

While Memory begins recording, coding,

Repeating; all the time Imagination

Mutters: You'll only die.

Here's a new day. O Pendulum, move slowly!

My usual clothes are waiting on their peg.

I am alive—this I.

And in a moment Habit, like a crane,

Will bow its neck and dip its pulleyed cable,

Gathering me, my body, and our garment,

And swing me forth, oblivious of my question,

Into the daylight—why?

I think of all the others who awaken,

And wonder if they go to meet the morning

More valiantly than I;

Nor asking of this Day they will be living:

What have I done that I should be alive?

O, can I not forget that I am living?

How shall I reconcile the two conditions:

Living, and yet—to die?

Between the curtains the autumnal sunlight
With lean and yellow finger points me out;
The clock moans: Why? Why? Why?
But suddenly, as if without a reason,
Heart, Brain and Body, and Imagination
All gather in tumultuous joy together,
Running like children down the path of morning
To fields where they can play without a quarrel:
A country I'd forgotten, but remember,
And welcome with a cry.

O cool glad pasture; living tree, tall corn,
Great cliff, or languid sloping sand, cold sea,
Waves; rivers curving: you eternal flowers
Give me content, while I can think of you:
Give me your living breath!
I want no death.

HAROLD MONRO.

MORNING VANITIES

MORNING . . . and wind . . . and all the shivered
leaves

Are startled with this light upon themselves,
This sudden stir that wakens them and weaves
A blurred, green dance—that might be twirling
elves.

They put a strain upon the sober bough
To stand this infinite tugging at each stem,
So eager are they, and so lovely, now,
With this first light of morning over them.

And it is well for me and for my heart
To have such happy things thus near at hand,
Where every lightest, errant wind will start
A green and silver rustle in this band
Of twirling shapes that might as well be elves,
So much they love their dancing—and themselves.

DAVID MORTON.

EARTH-BOUND

WHEN my last hope had failed, and in my heart
I knew I had been stricken, silently
I left all I had known, and stole apart,
And in new loneliness and poverty,
Resolved to cleanse my soul of all the dust
With which the earth had filled it; I would lay
Upon it no more gifts to fade or rust,
No dreams, no foolish gladness to decay,
For I'd been wounded by appalling things;
I had been made to look into the eyes
Of haughty men, and on the tattered wings
Of prisoned birds; I'd listened to the cries
Of enemies beside an open grave,
And I had seen old, faded women keep
Pitiful scraps of wreaths that used to pave
The way beneath their feet; and of these, deep
And ugly wounds were made. And so I went,
Ill and exhausted, from the hateful sight
Of all that filled my strange environment,
And wept by day, and held Death's hand by night,
And knew not how to reason. In despair
I asked if Death might lead me to a place
Where such things could not be, and in a fair
Vision of paradise, I learned to trace
The outlines of a city roofed with gold.
And there were trees weighed down with fragrant
flowers,
And I was offered friendly hands to hold.

And there was no timepiece to count the hours
Of joy allotted me; and there was none
With any wish to wound me; so I went
From dream to dream before my sleep was done,
But when I woke, I lay in wonderment
To realize that all I had conceived
Of paradise was but the best I knew
Of what the earth possessed. Had I believed
That I, being earthy, I that slowly grew
From nothingness, like all earth-nourished things,
Might fashion, with this perishable brain,
Hopes that were not poor mortal reasonings?
No, now I saw how idly I had lain
In bandages, and was not ill at all,
And saw the earth was good, since of its best
My paradise was fashioned. Straight and tall,
I rose up from that place, and on my breast
The forest cast its shadows while I ran,
Bewildered and in ecstasy, among
The flowers; and my enchanted heart began
To hear the hymns and pæans softly sung
By hidden hamadryads; then I knew
I had been roused by beauty, and no more
Would scorn the earth, nor cry it held too few
Reasons for happiness. Despair might pour
Her bitter wines in vain; I would not drink.
Yes, Life itself might bend my head and show
Me little evil things; I would not think
Evil of her for that, for I would know
I need not hold them long against my heart,

Since I was certain there awaited me
Beauty enough to tear my soul apart
As grief had never done; and suddenly
Such gratitude was on me that I knelt,
And laid my cheek against the earth's cool breast,
And on my neck and lowered head I felt
The kisses of the wind, and I confessed
All of my sins, until the kindly sun
Leaned down and touched me, and my pale brown
hair

Seemed beautiful, as it had never done
Before his soft caress, and I seemed fair,
And guiltless as a child. And when night came,
And sent him on his way, I did not stir,
But stayed to hear the tall trees speak the name
Of her, the prodigal daughter, speak of her
They had forgiven for her foolishness,
And from their boughs the joyful leaves flew down,
And welcomed me, and on my crumpled dress
The moon laid golden shadows, and a crown
Of light was on my head, and in that place
I felt the earth's breast yield beneath my kiss,
And all night long I lay in her embrace,
Content to know no greater love than this.

HELENE MULLINS.

THE SAINTS ON STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

THE saints on stained glass windows have an air
Of charming affectation, for they seem
To have endured strange sorrows in a dream,
To have in dreams had lovely griefs to bear.

Perpetually faithful and sincere,
They cultivate no wit nor subtlety
To cloud themselves in any mystery,
They are as passionless as they appear.

Each with a halo and a wistful face,
They bow before a cross or lift their eyes
Above an empty cross to empty skies,
And all their attitudes are full of grace.

The saints on stained glass windows are like old
And vivid legends; time is powerless
To leave on them one mark of its caress,
To disarrange their garments by one fold.

Each with a pride as if about to pass
Into some other world, each with amazing
Credulity, perpetually gazing
On some bright vision just beyond the glass.

HELENE MULLINS.

OF LONELY THINGS

ALONG with men in alleyways at night,
Standing in doorways smoking cigarettes,
And soldiers singing on the road to war;
Along with sleeping men upon dark wharves,
And lonely men in cafés reading papers;
Along with pockfaced beggars by church doors,
Along with memories of lonely things
Lighted by lanterns, of the foreign lands,
My mind's uncertain shadow of the past
Contains an unobliterated ghost
Haunting the gateway to forgetfulness.

When slim girls smoothly walking, braceleted,
Perfumed and cool, go by with heavy men
Successfully important with small eyes,
I am aware that I remember you,
Whom love made beautiful, as one who died
So very long ago that it is vague;
Aware, sometimes, in my unquiet mind
There blossoms the pale petal of your face,
More tragic than the shadow on the world
Of that forlorn, grey lady, Loneliness,
Whose noiseless footfalls pace beside my own.

CHARLES NORMAN.

DEITY

IF I could have before I die
A plot of earth to call my own,
I should not so resentful lie,
Nor fret beneath the heavy stone.

A plot of earth by sunshine fed,
Or cradled in the snowy cold,
That bears the living and the dead
Serenely in its pregnant mold.

If I could see my kingdom shine
With miracle of blade and stem,
Could know a thousand grasses mine
And I the little lord of them,

Then might I see my tulips fade,
Remembering their bloomy prime,
Yet ply the quick relentless spade
To clear the way for poppy time;

And so forgive and understand
The God who makes us old and wise
Before he spurns us with his hand
And bids a younger rank arise.

JESSICA NELSON NORTH.

PROMPTINGS

You are not your father though you have his eyes,
I am not my mother though I have her way.
Self in each one of us hesitates and dies,
Now we are met in this important wise,
What should we say?

Boldly beginning you falter and retreat,
Something within us saddens and is vexed.
Shadowy pitfalls open at our feet.
Before I answer you my lips entreat,
“Mother, what’s next?”

JESSICA NELSON NORTH.

RETURN IN HARVEST

NEAR the wood, girth round with stubble,
One bright patch of corn is standing,
And a man laughs, and the girls there
Laugh with him and hoist their dresses.

On a stubble-blade he chooses
A young farmhand trains his cudgel,
Striking with a grim precision.
I, well screened I think, regard them.

Then a whistle and a scurry
And the last gold patch is toppling,
And the young man swings his cudgel,
And the girls in all directions

Flit, and pull their skirts about them,
Laughing with mock screams of terror;
One in my direction flying
Seems as though her fear were real.

She runs still, the rest are turning,
She drops skirts to run the faster,
Does not scream though she grows paler
As she tops the fence above me.

Pale she is, and her looped tresses
Are dull gold with lights of silver
As she stops and pants beneath the
Lancelight of the rustling branches.

FRANK O'CONNOR.

THREE OLD BROTHERS

WHILE some go dancing reels and some
Go stuttering love in ditches
The three old brothers rise from bed,
And moan, and pin their breeches;
And one says, "I can sleep no more,
I'd liefer far go weeping,
For how should honest men lie still
When brats can spoil their sleeping?"
And Blind Tom says, that's eighty years,
"If I was ten years younger
I'd take a stick and welt their rumps
And gall their gamest runner!"
But James the youngest cries, "Praise God,
We have outlived our passion!"
And by their fire of roots all three
Praise God after a fashion.

Says James, "I loved when I was young
A lass of one and twenty
That had the grace of all the queens
And broke men's hearts in plenty,
But now the girl's a gammy crone
With no soft sides or boosom,
And all the lads she kist's abed
Where the fat worm chews 'em;
And though she had no kiss for me,
And though myself is older,

And though my thighs are cold to-night,
Their thighs I think are colder!"

And Blind Tom says, "I knew a man
A girl refused for lover
Worked in America forty years
And heaped copper on copper,
And came back all across the foam,
Dressed in his silks and satins,
And watched for her from dawn to dark
And from Compline to Matins,
And when she passed him in her shawl
He cracked his sides for laughing,
And went back happy to the west
And heeded no man's scoffing,
And Christ!" moans Tom, "if I'd his luck
I'd not mind cold nor coughing!"

Says Patcheen then, "My lot's a lot
All men on earth might envy,
That saw the girl I could not get
Nurse an untimely baby!"
And all three say, "Dear heart! Dear heart!"
And James the youngest mutters,
"Praise God we have outlived our griefs
And not fell foul like others,
Like Paris and the Grecian chiefs
And the three Ulster brothers!"

FRANK O'CONNOR.

PUPPETS

It was her duty to unsnarl the strings
Before the show, to play the ugly sister,
The cat, or Cinderella, but the things
She loved most were the dolls themselves who
 kissed her

When she had hooked them to their pegs at night—
They looked at her most understandingly.
The horrid stepmother filled her with fright—
A wicked doll whose eyes could surely see,
So cunningly averted, with such stealth
Her glances followed. Little puppeteer—
The tiny slipper and the pumpkin wealth,
The coachmen, gossamers, and prince, are near—
 Will you cheat Cinderella, or yourself,
 Who are not more of woman than of elf?

MADEFREY ODHNER.

LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES, 1850

THIS was a time unvexed by too much haste,
When the heart's dear complacencies and pains
Found solace and delight in Autumn lanes,
And the world's wonder was not yet laid waste
By that despairing creed that darkens our day,
That last unwisdom that at last we are wise
And have found out the imposture of the skies
And mocked the soul back into its writhing clay.
No matter. It was but some days ago

When for my love and me, earth as of old
Made a green bed and drenched the air with
gold,
And to our leaping pulse opposed her slow
Untired antiphony. And she will sing
Some few days hence to quicken our blood with
Spring.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL.

THE CUPBOARD NIGHTINGALE

I

I AM not wicked; it's my Muse that's wicked.
I'm haunted; I'm a house that's got a ghost.

I am not noble; she, my Muse, is noble.
I'm clay; but she's a blade from Uriel's host.

I am not saved; I'm outcast under Heaven.
Yet Satan fears me, for she twists his thumbs.

She's outcast, too; for proud and pitiful
She follows me, and beats my spirit's drums.

I am not lovely; she, my Muse, is lovely.
I'm brindled—Ah! the cupboard creaks. She
comes.

II

What is it, Thing? Why dost thou so torment me?
When thou art gone why do I grieve and hate?
When thou art there why does the World escape
me?—

Thou scorner of each pleading purse and plate.
Is it by freak of birth, or for some sinning,
Or out of virtue I am thus and thus?
Mammon sits on my blackened hearthstone, grin-
ning,

A ghost like thee, and worse,—the spirit's smutch,
And sniffing to the lice and cobwebbed throng.
"A charming house, indeed! Pull down the blind.
Who cares a shilling clothes-prop for a song!"

III

Still, that's the Devil, Mammon is the Devil,
A skunk that clots the soul and blinds the brain.
I suffer for a sin that's not my sinning
When I'm the best house all along the lane.

So come, my Muse, possess the premises,
Let in the sunlight, higher switch the blind.
To Hell with mumble Mammon's bitter solaces,
The skies are generous when the floor's unkind.

IV

Let in the sun and all the winds of morning,
Invite the spring and zephyrs from the glade,
Bring daffodil torches to defeat his scorning,
Ignite Sin's vesture and remove the shade.

Thus dumb swans sing, and Christ rides home on
asses,

The butterfly devours the nettle scourge,
And prison-walls intone cathedral masses,
And clay and fire commingle and converge.

HERBERT E. PALMER.

ON A THEME FROM SAPPHO

EVENING brings all things home that bright day
scattered—

The lamb, the kid, the child, each to its mother.

You, you only, evening brings not home,

But comes, for me, without the evening star.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER PERCY.

A SHOT AT NIGHT

A SHOT rings out upon the dreaming night.
Night shivers to pieces like a broken vase;
The stars are spangled on the sky like lace;
The moon is shedding a terrible cold light;
And, like the crystal running of a stream
Of water flowing from a broken jar,
Fear creeps across the earth, and every star
Stops moving, and a moment dulls the gleam

Of the ivory moon. The rustling boughs of trees
Are silent, and a rare and breathless chill
Falls on the world, and makes it very still.
Then the cocks crow, a watchdog barks ill ease
And is chorused by a hundred yapping curs.
Men turn in beds. A wind like weeping stirs.

IDELLA PURNELL.

FOR TWO FRIENDS

SHE bears her useful harness awkwardly
Who had been made for thoughts, to see them glow
When she had tossed them up; and secretly
Within my brain they shimmered, drifting so.

He wanders in my blood, the frustrate man
Who was to lose his quiet lonely fight
For perfect liberty; yet I began
Long since to nurse that plundering delight.

They live together, and improbably
They keep a mad menagerie of chance—
Old women, children, cats and company—
And yet intact among such circumstance.

Strange parents, who so easily can be
Like friends to me, a twisted son like me.

H. PHELPS PUTNAM.

THE OLD FISHERMAN

THE old man troubled me, sitting so lax in the
boat,
So fulfilled,
With that indrawn umbilicular look
Translating the centre of being
To terms of himself.
And his indolent line in the water,
A nerve outside of his body,
Keeping his touch on the pulse of the sea.

The old man sucked at his pipe,
Answered, "Uh-huh,"
Kindly, abstractedly, nothing to talk about—
He, an initiate.

BEATRICE RAVENEL.

NINA

SHE was a woman like a candle-flame—
This stranger dead a score of years ago—
Tall, clearly dark. We liked, but said not so,
The slowness and the music of her name.
A widow. She was kind, the women knew,
And lent them patterns of her violet frocks:
And she had lovers. Past her high, crabbed box
Went the sour judge, the rosy doctor too.
Once, twice, a black word pricked the countryside.
She heard, and held a flower up to her lips,
Spoke brightly of our town, its small, close life:
On a wild morning of a sudden she died.
The next a loud man, with the air of ships,
Stood by her coffin head, and called her wife.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE.

CREATOR

BRAVER than any who of old
 Pressed heaven against their eyes and died
He felt the loveliness he held
 Go limp along his side.

He, cursed with no eternity,
 Had made eternities of love,
Bequeathing them the darkness he
 Spent centuries in learning of.

In them he must forever go
 Tramping the earth, and cry for rest
From mouths that he would never know.
 His head was heavy on her breast.
 DOROTHY E. REID.

THE WRESTLERS

A PAUSE; and then a silent glide
From opposite corners, and they cling
With almost tender hands; their feet
Circle the eye-encircled ring

Like cats, like panthers. They are lost
In wariness; and lost no less,
Watchers draw in their breath and lean
And stare and wait, till wariness

Becomes intolerable. An arm
Clamps down . . . and in a minute more
A lightning-muscled body slips
Like velvet to a velvet floor.

DOROTHY E. REID.

MEN

I LIKE men.

They stride about,
They reach in their pockets
And pull things out;

They look important,
They rock on their toes,
They lose all the buttons
Off of their clothes;

They throw away pipes,
They find them again.
Men are queer creatures;
I like men.

DOROTHY E. REID.

SOUL TO BODY

DRIFT idly now, vexed oar, the race is over;
Relax, bent fingers, on the purse and plow;
Crumble, glazed clay, among the roots of clover;
It is not likely you will need me now.

Nor does it matter that I loved you dearly;
I would not choose to leave you, but I must.
The room is dark, I cannot see you clearly,
I too am fading into homeless dust.

I will dissolve as you are now dissolving;
Farewell, I shall not trouble you again;
You will not know me, when through mists revolving
You rise in dew, and I descend in rain.

HENRY MORTON ROBINSON.

BLACK TARN

THE road ends with the hills.

No track continues the fair and easy way
That leads in safety beside the valley lake,
Skirting the lake, the lake of candid waters
Sleek among rising fells. It is a valley
Veined by one road, one smooth and certain road,
Walled on the fell-side, walled against the boulders,
The rough fell-side, where few penurious sheep
Find a scrimp pasture, stray, crop, wander;
A road whence the traveller may scan the valley,
Seeing the lake, the prospect north and south,
The foot of the fells; and lifting up his eyes,
May scan the head of the mountains, dwelling in
the mist.

He may explore the ferns, the little lichens,
The tiny life at fell's foot, peaty pools,
Learning their detail, finding out their habit;
This, and the general prospect of the valley,
Lie and proportion of the fells, sky, waters,
All from the road. But the road ends with the
hills.

At the valley's head the road ends, making no
curve
To return whence it came, but, bluntly barred,
Stops with the slope. The road's crisp gravel
Softens to turf, to swamps of spongy peat,

Boulders flung down in anger, brown streams
poured

From inaccessible sources. The dull brute hills
Mount sullen, trackless; who would climb, must
climb

Finding a way, steps tentative,
Thoughtful, and unrelated, steps of doubt,
Sometimes of exultation. Now see the lake
With its companion road, safe in the valley,
That birdseye, easy conquest. Left below
That known, seen, travelled region. . . . Sagging
clouds

Veil the high hills, raze the peaks level,
Wimple in white the hidden tors, the final
Pricking of height towards sky; still through the
mist

Each conquered patch spreads visible, unrolls
Its footing of turf or stone.
Faith knows the shrouded peaks, their composition,
Granite or shale, their sundered rock
Like an axe's cleavage, wedge of scars.
Faith knows they wait there, may be scaled.
But few climb higher than these middle reaches,
Difficult, wild enough; slopes to be won
Nor wholly relinquished, even when steps return
To the easy lowland, to the calm lake's shore,
For they abide in the mind, as a value held,
A gain achieved.

Most certainly I remember
A lonely tarn in the hills, a pool in a crater,

Lustrous as armour, wet rocks, and still, round
pool.

Lustrous, but with a sheen not taken from heaven,
Not with a light as lit the lake below
In the open valley, frank and susceptible,
Receiving and giving back; but inward, sullen,
In the crater's cup, as drawing out
Some dark effulgence from subterranean depths,
Self-won, self-suffered. Stones I threw
Sank, forced the surface to a ripple,
But like a plummet dropped into earth's bowels
Were swallowed, and the satanic darkness closed
As though no wound had been.

I have seen Black Tarn,
Shivered it for an instant, been afraid,
Looked into its waters, seen there my own image
As an upturned mask that floated
Just under the surface, within reach, beyond reach.
There are tarns among hills, for all who climb the
hills,

Tarns suddenly stumbled on, sudden points of
meaning

Among the rough negative hills, reward
Precious and fearful, leaving a discontent
With the lake in the valley, and the road beside the
lake,

And the dwellings of men, the safety, and the ease.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

BALLAD OF THE DOLPHIN'S DAUGHTER

THE dreaming ocean
Stirred in the night
With soft slow breathing
In the dim starlight

Where the dolphin's daughter
Floated with the tide,
Her face thrown backward,
Her arms spread wide,

Her small round breasts
Gleaming coldly pale
Through a drift of seawood
Feathery and frail.

And a ship came looming
Out of the night;
It touched the dark water
With red and green light,

And a voice called out:
"O dolphin's daughter,
Come sail with me
On the curving water!"

A thing more lovely
She never had seen

Than how the water trembled
With red and green.

A thing more stately
She never had known
Than the huge black prow
Where phosphorus shone.

A thing more dreadful
She never could wish
Than to leave the safe water
And the smooth fair fish.

But she came in terror,
She came in pride,
And dark arms drew her
Up the ship's tall side.

The ship was floating
On an even keel,
And the smooth hard deck
Had a curious feel

Of something firm
In the restless motion
Of earth and wind
And sky and ocean.

"What is this fish
That swims so high,

Its tall fins reaching
To the thin windy sky?"

She, the dolphin's daughter.
And a dark voice stirred
From the bulk of shadow
That a dim face blurred.

"A thing half magic
And half a living thing,
A belly for treasure,
And for the wind, a wing!"

She felt him coming
Through the shadowy gloom,
And night grew narrow
Like a breathless room;

And as the water trembles
Before a sea-change,
Her cool wet body
Grew warm and strange.

With hurrying words
She broke the spell:
"Where is the treasure
That you hide so well?"

Down into the hold
Peered the dolphin's daughter—

She saw the ship filling
With black sea water

Shining like steel,
Quiet as death;
The sight of prisoned water
Snatched away her breath.

She fled to the prow
To dive back home
Through the deep green water
And the light white foam—

For she loved wild ocean
And the waves' mad thunder:
She looked . . . was frozen
With icy wonder. . . .

The sea from a doomed ship
That none can save
Looks cold as death
And black as the grave.

The sea from a doomed ship
Sinking in the night
Looks darkly evil
And bitterly bright.

The sea from a doomed ship
Leaving light and air

Looks wide as eternity
And deep as despair.

The rats came up
To leap and die;
The king of rats chittered
As he ran by:

"The figure of a mermaid
Stands in the bow;
We never had a figurehead
Here till now,

"We never had a figurehead
Staring at the sea. . . .
Close your eyes tight, rats,
And dive with me!"

And he leapt from the arm
Of the dolphin's daughter
Whose wide eyes stared
At the curving water.

MARJORIE ALLEN SEIFFERT.

A LODGING

CLEAR now I can remember all
And happy I can laugh at it,
The gaudy paper on the wall
And the frail chair where I would sit
A half night through sometimes, to make
A sad verse sweet for Beauty's sake.

Three wretched years I spent there, made
Most sorrowful by sordid things;
A thousand daylights bruised me, weighed
Like lead upon my spirit's wings;
And night that gave them flight again
Still ringed them round with clouds of pain.

Through my half window's borrowed light
I just could catch a glimpse of sky
And stars upon a frosty night,
And the great moon go sailing by.
And once beyond the dingy glass
I saw a swallow dart and pass!

I never knew a flower or bird
In all that city sprawling wide,
Save when the singing west wind stirred
Sometimes, or a lost seagull cried;
Or when in a far place I knew
The red rose of the sunset grew.

And yet I had my hoards of gold,
Housed though they were in no fit place;
The beautiful great minds of old
In orange box and packing-case!
And Shakespeare's shade and Shelley's bust
And Keats serene amid the dust.

The spirits of the great men there
Haunted my dreams; I tried to reach
Into their heaven, to catch, to share
Some shadowy echo of their speech.
But when the spirit's in the pit
The breath of song blows over it.

Now it is finished and at last
I've got a prisoner's release;
In pastures new my lot is cast
And the thronged soul has found its peace;
And I can laugh now quit of pain,
And after silence, sing again.

THOMAS SHARPE.

THE TRICK

HOLD for me, closely together,
The four corners of the earth.
Pull one: out scampers the agile
White rabbit of my youth.
Pull two: a green surprising wraith
Floats seaward.
Pull three: hark to the ringing
Of a distant temple bell.
Pull four—no, I will not!—
In my home corner I am old by my fire.

FRANCES SHAW.

MOTHER BLOOD

HE found the cook-stove cold and when he called
No footfalls sounded on her bedroom floor:
The press of fear lay heavy on his heart
Before he reached the threshold of her door.

No trace was there to point where she had gone;
The patchwork quilt looked strangely smooth
and still:
No dents were in the pillows of her bed—
Her week-day dress was flung across the sill.

It found him unprepared though he had sensed
His daughter had been prisoned over-long:
Words she had dropped—a lilting tune she crooned
Surged back to taunt him like a crazy song.

The love of silken baubles she displayed
Had seemed to him a silly, girlish whim;
But now the import of the hint it held
Came crashing through to carry truth to him.

He boiled his morning coffee all alone,
Keeping upon his face a queer, strained look
Though once he left his task and crossed the room
To part the velvet covers of a book.

He held the album while he mutely gazed
Upon a tintype picture, dim with age:

A woman in an over-ribboned frock
Whose laughing visage mocked him from the
page.

JAY G. SIGMUND.

PASSAGE

SHE went away, a wearied thing
Upon an autumn night—
Too tired for spreading out her wing,
Almost too tired for flight.

A leaf upon my arm could lie
Not half so light as she.
Almost, almost too tired to die,
She went away from me.

MABEL SIMPSON.

AN EVANGELIST DROWNS

THROUGH green-white breakers swift I leap,
Sun-sparkled seas my body keep;
Bearer of Gospel-Glory I
With singing angels in my sky,
And earthly chorus at command,
The trumpets of my silver band!
The cripples to my temple crowd,
I heal them, and they shout aloud.
A thousand miles my raptures go
Upon my magic radio.
Time, space and flesh I rise above,
I turn them into singing love. . . .

What's this? A terror-spasm grips
My heart-strings, and my reason slips.
Oh, God, it cannot be that I,
The bearer of Thy Word, should die!
My letters waiting in the tent!
The loving messenger I sent!
My daughter's voice, my mother's kiss!
My pulpit-notes on Genesis!
Oh, count the souls I saved for Thee,
My Saviour—wilt Thou not save me?
Ten thousand to my aid would run,
Bring me my magic microphone!
Send me an angel, or a boat . . .
The senseless waters fill her throat.
Ten million tons of waters hide

A woman's form, her Faith deride;
While thousands weep upon the shore,
And searchlights seek . . . and breakers roar. . . .

Oh, gallant souls that grope for light
Through matter's blind and lonely night!
Oh, piteous minds that seek to know
That which is so—
And piteously have forgot
That which is not!

UPTON SINCLAIR.

THE SCANDAL

(FROM "THE CHILDHOOD OF CENDRILLON.")

YELLOW the path
As bright nankeen;
One tall tree hath
Gauds like a queen
And one thick bush has shades that bark
And dogskin leaves that hunt. The park
Watched Cupid kneel on the terrestrial
Brink of that Empire Celestial
The lake where small fish wave a fin.
He wore long trousers of nankeen.
A fish came like
A little boy
Envyng Prince Cupid's toy,
Envyng Prince Cupid's game,
And their attire
Was just the same:—
In that clear kingdom then the thrilled
Small fish was dressed like him—a frilled
Blue coat with brassy buttons on it,
White nankeen trousers, a flat bonnet.
As a boy climbs in apple trees
Where leaves and fruit shake in the breeze,
So Cupid watched his young friend shake
The spreading branches of the lake.
"Your boughs seem like the wall of China,"
He told this friend in costume finer,

“And through the thick boughs of those grounds
We hear no sound of horn and hounds
And see no stag. No hounds there bark
And no hares gallop in that park.”
Just then, the lovely lake reflected
Not at all what they expected.
To Vulcan Cupid called, “Papa,
Come quick! I’ve seen Mars kiss mamma!”
Beneath a bush where shadows bark
Papa sat in the dreamy park—
Papa sat where a shadow-hound
Hunted a hare-quick dream; and drowned
In a set-piece of whiskers, more
And more his partridge-whirring snore
Blew the lake’s park quite away—
With all its temples, through bright day—
Through fields full of bird-feathered glints
And buttercups of yellow chintz.
He woke from dreams:
“My child, my joy,
It really seems
You *must* annoy!
And this deception is most bad.”
This the reception the child had.
He laid his joy across his knee:
“This hurts you less than it hurts me.
To bed you’ll hie this instant minute.
It’s wrong to lie, so don’t begin it.
Though it is flower-shining day,
Your trousers shall be laid away.

Nobody cares who wears them now,—
Dog-barking bushes, Mrs. Cow,
Or the cross Begum of Nepal,—
Nobody cares at all, at all.
These wait, in perfect unity,
This mournful opportunity.”

EDITH SITWELL.

CONFLICT

THE sea is forever quivering,
The shore forever still;
And the boy who is born in a sea-coast town
Is born with a dual will:
The sun-burned rocks and beaches
Inveigle him to stay;
While every wave that breaches
Is a nudge to be up and away.

WILBERT SNOW.

TO PAIN

SANDALLED with morning and with evening star,
Draw near me, Lady of ascendant pain,
Whose hair has touched me in the twilight rain,
Whose home is where unchanging faces are.
You wait me where immortal feet have trod,
And in your voice is music not-to-be,
And in your eyes the night of mystery,
Old as the silence on the lips of God.

There is no treason in your given word.
Your love is past all love, all vain delights,
And holy is the music I have heard.
'Tis not the Cytherean that shall lead
To stranger seas and unimagined heights,
Nor stand in flame beside me at my need.
GEORGE STERLING.

SEPTEMBER

THE dark brown waters brim
From little lake to lake,
Rustle and fall in slim
Streams down the mossy side
Of stone, while dim ferns shake
Their level spread of leaf,
Dust-grey beneath the wide
Cold light that these days take,
Gathering the calm grief
Into the face of the skies
Out of the heart-ache
The mortal heart denies.

H. STUART.

CAPTIVE

ISN'T she soft and still?
Isn't she warmly bent
Enough to suit your will
And merriment?

Isn't she gold and white?
Isn't her body drawn
Quiveringly still with the fright
Of a faun?

And if under your touch
She trembles cold and taut,
It should not matter much—
She is caught.

MARION STROBEL.

FLIRT

WILL you believe me if I say I want
Your presence, in the casual way of those
Who, loving battle, turn at every taunt
That they may feel the joy of dealing blows?
It is not you! It is not you, alas!

You are a man, stoop-shouldered, in a chair.
I shall forget you. Everything will pass
But the strange need to have another there:
An adversary for the vacant spot,
A seasoned battler for the mimic war
That I may tilt with words—and, like as not,
Feel the elation of a conqueror.

I should not want you if you would not leave me.
Oh, turn your face this way! Do you believe me?
MARION STROBEL.

A FLEET OF GEESE

At Fiddler's Island in the Thames,
Just outside Oxford town,
I watched a crowd of cackling geese
That riverward came down.

Oh how they craned and trumpeted!
The strident challenge flew;
'Twas, "No, I don't agree with that!"
And, "I am telling you!"

They took the water one by one,
And sat there side by side;
And soon their eager clamour ceased,
As might a gale subside.

A silent, serried, gleaming fleet,
With a steady breeze a-beam,
They drifted slowly from the shore,
Each bright bill turned upstream.

Passive and still they gazed ahead;
The wind blew on their flank;
A grey, compacted, floating isle,
They gained the further bank,

And landed just as they set forth,
Singly, in order due;

And sought their island pasturage,
When loud the gabble grew.

The human race hold parliaments
Where many a thing's begun;
Geese, likewise, have their great debates,
But get the business done.

JOHN ANDERSON STEWART.

DITTY

THE moon will run all consciences to cover,
Night is now the easy peer of day;
Little boys no longer sight the plover
Hung on the sky, and cattle go
Warily out in search of misty hay.
Look to the grackle, the pretty eager swallow,
The crow, and all the birds that sail
With the smooth essential flow
Of time through men, who fail.

For now the moon with friendless light carouses
On hill and housetop, street and marketplace;
Men will plunge, mile after mile of men,
To crush this lucent madness of the face—
Go home and put their heads upon the pillow,
Turn with whatever shift the darkness cleaves,
Tuck in their eyes, and cover
The flying dark with sleep like falling leaves.

ALLEN TATE.

THE APPRAISAL

NEVER think she loves him wholly,
Never believe her heart is blind,
All his faults are locked securely
In a closet of her mind;
All his indecisions folded
Like old flags that time has faded,
Limp and streaked with rain,
And his cautiousness like garments
Frayed and thin, with many a stain—
Let them be, oh let them be,
There is treasure to outweigh them,
His proud will that sharply stirred
Climbs as surely as the tide,
Senses strained too taut to sleep,
Gentleness to beast and bird,
Humour flickering hushed and wide
As the moon on moving water,
And a tenderness too deep
To be gathered in a word.

SARA TEASDALE.

A STAR MAP

ALL of heaven in my hands—
With one finger I can turn
Till I sink Orion's bands,
And the Lyre begins to burn.

I can make a night of spring,
Shivering Spica, white Altair,
And above me I can swing
Slowly Berenice's Hair.

Winter evening, autumn dawn
Man has charted; I can see
How Midsummer Night moves on
Tranquilly and terribly;

Light lost in light, death lost in death,
Time without end, Space without bound—
I, whose life is but a breath,
Turn Infinity around.

SARA TEASDALE.

A FOOTNOTE OF HISTORY

ARCHERS stood at semicircular moats
Shooting into man's quarry;
Helmeted hewers ate at the stone
Set surface to surface;
Others, clasping the pure pennants,
Lifted up their lips to pray
Prayers visible to their stout oafs.
Within, men sick with lead
Boiled in cranny dens
Poured out the graying stuff.
On they come
With a fearful forebrow,
Holders of the battering ram,
Holding like a tortuous slug
Or a hundred-legged bug.
All the air shivers,
To beyond the scummiest moat
Where dead men's eyes like old frogs' eggs
Ogle the pretty sky.
To topple and fall to an impaled rest
That glittering wing climbed up,
That glittering wing of men
Like beetle-backed ivy over a wall.
Here sally beplumed ones,
Orange and green,
Swinging biting crescents of steel.
Each swing pulls out the red,
Gladdening, like frost on a mountain.

Look, women retainers,
Through the squinters' slits!
At the heaps on heaps on heaps,
Wriggling here and there like ripe cheese,
But mostly upward glancing,
From water,
Ophelia eyes in the moats
Poor old frogs' eggs.

SHERWOOD TRASK.

THE DARK FORTNIGHT

OH, I could weep with despair,
In this blind, barren time,
For themes that have loosened their hair
And dangled the glittering strands
For other eyes than mine
And hands that are not my hands.

Helen's bitter loveliness
Took Homer by the heart and cried
Out against death with such distress
That he must build a house of words
To keep her, in her crimson pride,
Laughing forever above swords.

Joyous sylvaneries among
The sullen poppies of the south
So loosened Theocritus' tongue
That songs ran from it in a rain,
Honey and myrtle sweet—what mouth
Dare sing of Arcady again?

There is no more to be said
Of battles, gallimaufries, kings,
Love feasting on starry bread
Or love crying with bitter cry—
All that's to be said of these things
Was said at Shottery.

And that old hawk of the west
Lured with his dark Egyptian eyes
The breast of legend to his breast,
And queens, yellow-haired and young,
Drew the tides of shadowy seas
Into the full moon of his song.

I will go find me a spear
Of wild-goose-feather wrought,
And fashion the ears of a hare
To a parchment of silk,
And pray to the ewes of thought
To let down their milk. . . .

PAMELA TRAVERS.

IF WE FOUND WORLDS

IF we found worlds of sapphire and of jade
Peopled with Lancelots and proud Ettarres
Fit for our perfect mating, if one laid
Star upon star and built a house of stars

And then

Calling us in out of the ways of men
Tipped to our mouths from alabaster jars
The honey-mead of kings—we'd be afraid—

Afraid that these found splendours were not worth
The smallest moment of dreaming, nor the white
Turrets of Heaven so lovely as the birth
Of eglantine upon a meadow height,

Afraid

To see the brave questing and the full years made
Pitiful by this end, and through the light
We would go crying for our sweet dark earth.

PAMELA TRAVERS.

BURNING BUSH

AND suddenly the flowing air stands still
And the loose night grows tense and small;
Runners of flame from nowhere rise and fill
The narrowest veins, till all

The martyrdom of fire is not enough
For bodies eager to be doomed;
Burning in one long agony of love,
Burning, but not consumed.

And the last white blaze leaps from our being's
 core,
And flesh, too shaken to rejoice,
Cries out till quiet, vaster than before,
Speaks in the still, small voice.

LOUIS UNTERMAYER.

LONG FEUD

WHERE, without bloodshed, can there be
A more relentless enmity
Than the long feud fought silently

Between man and the growing grass?
Man's the aggressor, for he has
Weapons to humble and harass

The impudent spears that charge upon
His sacred privacy of lawn.
He mows them down, and they are gone

Only to lie in wait, although
He builds above and digs below
Where never a root would dare to go.

His are the triumphs till the day
There's no more grass to cut away,
And, weary of labor, weary of play,

Having exhausted every whim,
He stretches out each conquering limb.
And then the small grass covers him.

LOUIS UNTERMAYER.

FINAL HARVEST

HE kept to his alliance with the soil,
Coaxing his native apple trees to yield;
Betrayed forever by a thing called toil,
A garden and an orchard and a field.
He was concerned with little more at all
Than sun and rain and if the harvest throve,
Held in at best by a New England wall,
And in the winter by a bed and stove.

And if reward was his, who shall define
What lay between the labour and the pay;
Fifty odd years of work before decline,
And then Time puts a penny on the eyes;
The wick is snuffed, the harvest put away,—
For other harvests under other skies.

HAROLD VINAL.

THE DREAM IS SWIFT

THE dream is swift and centuries elapse
In five brief minutes, so the round of slumber
May be a trip to Jupiter perhaps,
Past stars that Galileo could not number.
The dream is fast, from crag to crag, from peak
To higher peak we swing, planet to planet;
Circle, say, twenty oceans in a week,
Look out upon a continent and span it.

Poor puny mortals that we are, we stride
Laggards behind the dream, and we must be
Forever late or early, never ride
The beggar's horse into eternity,
Outdistance comets and the eagle's scream—
Like owls we nod and are content to dream.

HAROLD VINAL.

MEDITATION

EVENING has quieted the wind, the night
Is soft around me while I sit alone
And reading by calm candle-light.

The voice of a forgotten poet cries
From the clear page up to my listening heart,
And my heart listens, and replies.

And yet even in loveliness I find
No refuge from old wonder; the old thoughts
And the old questions come to mind.

Was it for this the ravin and the rage,
The lust and hunger of the centuries
Clamored,—to close in this calm page?

Beauty is desolate, being the crown
And end of all,—to her the laboring years
Lift yearning hands, and time bows down.

The ages travail with a great unrest,
In agony and ecstasy, to build
The frail arch of one dolorous breast.

I will not think of this; I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here,
“The Song to the Beloved One.”

The heart that wrought it, and the cunning hand,
Are stilled forever, and the poet lies
Forgotten in a far-off land.

He takes his ease in the dark earth, and there
Has rest from all his labors, and the night
Covers him with her heavy hair.

If I could pierce into that hushed abode
Of slumber and corruption, I should find
The mouth from which this sorrow flowed.

It would be quiet now, for all it cried,—
Most quiet and indifferent: it is
With its own sleep preoccupied.

Yet surely in this very room it sings
Miraculously to my heart to-night.
How shall I understand these things?

I will not think of them; I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here,
"The Song to the Beloved One."

The night is hushed around me while I move
Darkly, with dreamy thought, from page to page,
From line to line of grief and love.

The lonely splendor of Antares shines
Through the barred window, and an aphid crawls
Among the letters and the lines.

Little he guesses what these letters are,
Nor I the meaning of the trembling Word
Written beyond us, star on star.

The night covers us both, and we are driven,
Like leaves before the wind, through the immense
And glittering wilderness of heaven.

Earth takes us with her: silently she swings
Through the old orbit, bearing in her breast
The drowsy mouth, the mouth that sings.

And yet all this lives only in my mind;
And when that darkens, the whole world will
 darken
Suddenly,—the whole world go blind.

All I have touched, all I have loved and known
Will fail me,—and the breast of Life draw back,
Leaving me in the dark, alone.

O starry universe, hung in the clear
Bell of my mind, be living in me now!
Dwell in me for a moment here!

How often, in the many minds of men,
Have you been born, only to pass away,—
Dying with every mind again!

This is a thought that is too hard for me:
It is a bitter thing to think upon,
That, to myself, all this shall be

As if it had not been, when I am gone.

JOHN HALL WHEELLOCK.

THE WALLS OF HEAVEN

BROTHER, bend close and heed me well;—
Here in the darkness, all the night
I paced the floor of this narrow cell
With not so much as a candle's light.
Here in the dark I pace and trod . . .
And I have looked on the face of God!

*Brother, this is a marvelous thing
That never a mortal yet befell
And subtle beyond imagining
Are the ways of the cunning Lord of Hell;
Yet if this be truth—by God's holy name
Speak—and tell how the Lord God came.*

Verily, through my one small pane
I looked a hundred times an hour . . .
A thousand times I looked in vain
As I prayed for grace and faith and power.
But when I saw this wondrous sight
It was not dark, it was not light;
The dawn came filtering through the night.

I turned in my cell to face the dawn,
And there, instead of this dull gray wall
Were cliffs that towered more dizzily tall
Than I thought ever to look upon.
Down their steep and looming scarps
Hung glittering strings of God's own harps;

Up their sides to the topmost copes
They swayed and swung like golden ropes.
Then I knew that God had given
A boon most rare for mortal eyes—
I looked up at the walls of Heaven
And saw the City of Paradise.
It seemed as marvelously far
As it is from here to the furthest star;
And yet I saw it clear and plain
As a sunlit lawn still wet with rain.
There were porphyry domes and opal spires
And ivory turrets all ablaze
With quoins of beryl; and ruby fires
Glowed on altars of chrysoprase;
And all of the stars were set like lamps
On pillars of pearl, up winding ramps.

And this was much—but it was not all,
For I heard the sound of the Heavenly choir
Pouring down like a waterfall—
But the water thereof was foaming fire!
Down those cliffs the music came
In billowing fluttering sheets of flame.
The golden ropes against their face
Hummed like harps from top to base.
My evil thoughts, my carnal lusts
Were clean white ash in the fiery gusts.

Up on Heaven's highest hills
The music gathered in trickling rills.

Down their slopes it rippled and swelled
To brooks that bubbled and springs that welled.
Out of the crystal solitudes
It burst in booming emerald floods—
In lunging tides that reared and curled
Shuddering, on the vibrant ledge,
And fell like the seas of all the world
Hurtling over earth's outmost edge.

The seraphim and the cherubim
Sang as they danced on the roaring rim.
The songs they sang and the steps they trod
Were all to the praise and glory of God.
They danced and sang for the joy of their Lord
There on the verge of the precipice,
To the fife and the horn and the harpsichord
And every kind of music there is;
To clashing cymbals and braying brass
To the rustle of wind in frosty grass
To the ripple of bells and the rattle of tin
And the tenuous wail of the violin—
To organ pipes, with cavernous throats,
To clattering gongs—and woodwind notes
From the treble flute to the deep bassoon—
To the baying of hounds and the cry of the loon,
To the thunder's growl and the hurricane's scream
And every music that man may dream.

Then there suddenly was no sound
Except the song of the choir alone.

The curtains of flame were caught and bound
And the face of the cliff was still as stone.
But the choir sang there so shrill and high
It stood like a wall against the sky—
A sparkling shimmering wall of ice
From Hell to the Peaks of Paradise.

Against that thin soprano wall
The bass came swinging like a maul.
It beat the face of it like a drum—
“The Lord is come! The Lord is come!”
It stabbed the breast of it like a sword:—
“Hail to the Lord! Hail to the Lord!”

And then in awful silentness,
In blinding light too bright for flame,
In splendor you may never guess,
The Lord God came—the Lord God came!
He looked down from the soaring rim.
I looked up on the face of Him.

*Brother, out of your power and grace
Say on, say on and tell me more.
You who have looked on the Lord God's face,
Tell me what was the mien he wore?
Was it that of a man like you or me
Or was it the face of a Trinity?
And which of the three was set midmost—
The Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost?*

Brother, that I cannot tell;
My eyes are dimmed; my grace is gone.
Here in the blindness of my cell
I do not even see the sun.
I only know His glory shone
So unimaginably bright
That I shall pray for faith alone
And trim my candle against the Night.

JOHN FRENCH WILSON.

THE BLUECOAT BOY

I MET an angel in the Strand
with an umbrella in his hand,
talking with Paradisal joy
to a bewildered Bluecoat boy.
“And so,” he said, “I understand
this also is a Golden Strand,
that has, like heaven’s, for example
an edifice they call the Temple,
and leads by such another Bar
as ours to where the glories are
of what they tell me would be witty
to name the Uncelestial City.
Well! Well! Let us examine it.”
And, while he spoke, the street was lit
with some strange glory. Tired faces
shone like the sun in country places,
and people’s voices sounded, when
they spoke, like chords by Beethoven,
the motor-buses had the hot
splendour of a chariot,
the houses by the Aldwych were
as arrogant as Lucifer,
the island-churches, like a crowd
of golden starlings, cried aloud,
till none could say which were the bells,
and which were simply miracles,
the very paving-stones were led,
enchantingly astonished,

into a crazy pattern, laid
to trap the moss in ambushade.
Indeed the whole excited town
glowed like a shy, delicious noun,
when some great poet lets it live
at last beside its adjective."

And then I saw, like a superb
hawker, the angel at the curb
set London working like a toy—
And give it to the Bluecoat boy.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

VIOLINS

I HAVE loved violins, and I have thought as I heard
them

that they were birds crying at the other side of
a wood,
birds in the light beyond the dark wood, and none
has snared them.

I thought that they were birds crying, but I had
not understood.

They were a shadow, but not of song beyond the
world,

they were an echo, but not of invisible light.
They were love's first banners, tremblingly unfurled

by standard-bearers marching alone in the night.

They were the avant-posts, lifting their gold-
pennoned lances,

they were the harness ringing of beauty's vedettes,
and they reined their horses at the dawn where
romance is,

where the heart remembers, but the fiddle forgets.

For the fiddle soars up, and is lost in its own
silver cascade, that tumbles in rain,
out of the glory, that it could not have known,
back to the dark earth, that it spurned in vain.

Violin, Viola, viol d'amore
sing, and are silent, but I who guessed them
to be birds crying in some star-haunted story
of magic beyond the world, yet I have blessed
them.

For they have become the voice of my own heart
speaking,
they have become that voice, and one voice
dearer.
And they do not fall back to the earth, and there is
no waking,
but they shine, and rise like a star, and the star
draws nearer.

HUMBERT WOLFE.

OLD STORY

BEFORE his marriage, one had never known
Whether the Jew could settle down or not:
For instance, that wild tale of the jawbone,
And other rumors better left forgot.
His wife was wise, however, never stressed
Her private views too sharply; having shown
What she and all his friends considered best,
She let him strictly otherwise alone.

He never was betrayed—the simple truth
As all our best inscriptions prove, was this:
He seems at length to have realized how uncouth
Departure from good standards really is,
And trimmed his beard himself, and clipped his
hair,
Because he envied their superior air.

ROBERT WOLF.

TO EACH OF SEVERAL WOMEN

THROUGH bitter nights, or when my love was gone
 Apart from me, or when the streets were bare,
You gave me bed and shelter till the dawn,
 You smoothed my cheek against your cheek and
 hair;

And all the little intimate array
 That saves the heart from breaking when it
 should,

The shaded light, the warmth, the midnight tray,
 These you divided with me: you were good.

I left you with the milkteams: if we meet
 There is a peace between us, that is all—
A tiny pool of peace in room or street,
 Rather than any memory to recall
That two who have been one can never be
 Quite separate, or friends, entirely.

ROBERT WOLF.

EDEN

THE garden; the first year and the first June;
Bees, in the cherry-blossom snow,
Rehearsed the earliest honey-humming tune,
Mignonette and candy-tuft below.
"Eve, there is a very steady ache
"In my torn side, where once you laid.
"Can you not for Pity's sake
"Heal the wound your coming made?"
"Adam, I was born for your delight.
"See how our roof of blue
"Is fretted by the cherry-blossom white,
"The green grass new;
"See how our leopards play, and playing bite.
"Hold me against your side; close, close to you."
Dear little Eve, she was so sweet,
Her girlish breasts, delicately small,
Flower bells upon an ivory wall;
White doves, her slender feet;
Serpent-like, her firm, resilient arms;
Lily stalks, her virginal, white thighs;
Holding for him the infinite surprise;
For her—what harms!
The bees sang on. The boughs, above,
Scattered snowy rain.
Dear little Eve. She gave us love;
Adam gave us Cain.

CHARLES ERSKINE SCOTT WOOD.

A RED CARPET FOR SHELLEY

I

BUT this is nothing; an eccentric joke,
The legendary patchwork of a year
Flung into muddiness, like Raleigh's cloak,
To ask the honor of your step, my dear.
Your path is printed on the atmosphere
Forever as a flame against the smoke
Of obscure vision, and I must invoke
Your magnanimity to make it clear.

If I might spread soft words like living grass
Laid smooth beneath the heavy wheels of Time;
If I might loose the river of a rhyme
Or build a pavement out of gold and glass
Providing Heaven for you to walk upon,
It would be well; it would be better done.

II

The only engine which can fabricate
Language from spirit is the heart of each;
Industrious blood has braided into speech
The airy filaments of love and hate.
I have the labor of my own estate,
A pitiful machine which shall not reach
A single stellar thread; I cannot teach
Its narrow nerves the virtue to be great.

If my devout affection had been given
Commensurate power, which doubt nor custom
dulls;

If I possessed the pure and fiery pulse
By true divinity informed and driven,
I would unroll the rounded moon and sun
And knit them up for you to walk upon.

III

The little sum of my experience
Remains the sole contrivance I produce
To weave this mesh, to color and confuse
These ragged syllables with soul and sense.
I have been put to one supreme expense;
This was the noblest tincture I could use,
This the most subtle grain; I cannot choose
The dye to turn the lacklustre intense.

I have the proper scarlet of my veins,
The clean involved precision of my mind,
And you, who are so excellently kind,
Will not reject the tissue of my pains,
Stained by mortality's vermilion
To make a world for you to walk upon.

IV

Forgive the savage texture of the spoil
Tinted so barbarously by the clay

The rusty iron and the ocean-spray
Which lifted up my body from the soil.
Forgive the complicated brittle coil
Of my infirm invention, which I lay
Where you may pause, and pass, and never stay.
Here are the shocks of maize, the honey and oil,

The fruits like harvest moons, the fabulous land,
The crystal hills, the veiled prismatic plain;
And you will come, and you will not remain,
Nor leave a trace along the gilded sand.
So presently you will be come and gone;
Here's a strange road for you to walk upon.
ELINOR WYLIE.

APPENDIX

LAST year I started, very tentatively, a small list of poems, other than those reprinted in the book, which had given me pleasure. I did not like to make the grounds for mention less subjective than that, because pontifical judgments are out of place in a delicate art, and I have not the confidence to ladle out commendations and honorable mentions.

However, the list was appreciated, and so this year it has been allowed to grow. It is still very unsystematic and incomplete, because there was no means of finding out how the innovation would be liked until some time after the book appeared. We compile in June to publish in November: and as it is impossible to keep the files of all the weeklies, etc., in bulk, the earlier months of this book's year have been sadly neglected for all but the main purpose of inclusion in the book proper. Probable starters were clipped, and that was all.

Next year's list will be fuller and more orderly. Subject to necessary exceptions, I shall try to include the name and author of every poem which deserves a mention: and if I still keep enjoyment my criterion, instead of a more solemn or scho-

lastic basis of adjudication, it is perhaps because as a hardened reader of verse I do not readily enjoy work without merit.

A few names in this list, if they appear once, should appear at least a dozen times. For instance, the work of Miss Dorothy E. Reid, Miss Pamela Travers, Mr. Edward Davison, and Mr. Frank O'Connor has been so consistently good that any selection, for the body of the anthology or for here, must needs be arbitrary. Mr. Countée Cullen also gets less than his due.

The following, then, are some of the poems which make editing this book a pleasant task. There is something to enjoy in every one of them.

The Lost Host and The Lament of Quarry. LEONIE ADAMS. (*Poetry.*)

Let Me Be Honest For A Day. HARBOR ALLEN. (*Southwest Review.*)

Pasht, The Cat. LUCILE PERRY AMES. (*Palms.*)

The Mountain Ballad Singer. GEORGE LAWRENCE ANDREWS. (*America.*)

The Land Of The Average. BENJAMIN APPEL. (*Interludes.*)

St. Francis of Assisi According To His Brother in Christ Urban Timotheus of Padua Jongleur of the Lord. JOSEPH AUSLANDER. (*The Forum.*)

Though From Faded Leaf. G. B. (*Saturday Review.*)

Sonnets In Church. MARY FINETTE BARBER.
(*The Forge.*)

Barberry. SYLVIA BATEMAN. (*Interludes.*)

I Am Afraid. LIBBIAN BENEDICT.

The Sky's Too Full. ELIZABETH BIBESCO.

Answer. MILDRED BOWERS. (*Poetry.*)

Smoke. MILDRED BOWERS. (*The Harp.*)

Sutro. ROBERT L. BURGESS. (*Poetry.*)

Dialogue. THOMAS BUTLER. (*America.*)

Remembered Landing. GLADYS CAMPBELL. (*Poetry.*)

Never Silence. GLADYS CAMPBELL. (*Poetry.*)

One Night In Calera. CARL LAMSON CARMER.
(*Poetry.*)

March. ALBERT HARLEN CASTLE. (*Commonweal.*)

Heritage. M. L. CAUGHEY. (*Palms.*)

Domus Domini. FREDERICK MORTIMER CLAPP.
(*Poetry.*)

Old Maid. HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING.
(*Voices.*)

Bill George. MALCOLM COWLEY. (*Poetry.*)

From The Dark Tower. COUNTÉE CULLEN.
(*Fire!*)

Hotel-Lobby. S. FOSTER DAMON. (*Commonweal.*)

The Garnet Ring. JULIA JOHNSON DAVIS.
(*Lyric.*)

Judas. EDWARD DAVISON. (*London Mercury.*)

- The Dove Of The Ark. ROBERT DESNOS. (*Transition.*)
- The Bouquet. GLENN WARD DRESBACH. (*Voices.*)
- Interval. GLENN WARD DRESBACH. (*Voices.*)
- Portrait. LOUISE DRISCOLL. (*Poetry.*)
- Juniper. EILEEN DUGGAN. (*Commonweal.*)
- The Woman. ABBIE HUSTON EVANS. (*Poetry.*)
- The Teacher. LEONARD FEENEY. (*Commonweal.*)
- Song Of The Meadow Boy. LEONARD FEENEY. (*America.*)
- The Prisoner. BEN FIELD. (*Palms.*)
- Druid Sonnets. MILDRED FOWLER FIELD. (*The Midland.*)
- Lovers. SARA BARD FIELD. (*Poetry.*)
- The Ugly Duckling. F. V. FOLLETT. (*London Mercury.*)
- Silenced. RUTH MARY FOX. (*Commonweal.*)
- Once By The Pacific. ROBERT FROST. (*New Republic.*)
- Tin Can Birthdays. EUNICE GAILEY. (*Palms.*)
- Conflict. DOROTHY GARRISON. (*American Poetry Magazine.*)
- City Streets. LOUIS GINSBERG. (*Voices.*)
- Winter Morning After Sleet. LOUIS GINSBERG. (*Commonweal.*)
- Viaticum. HERBERT S. GORMAN. (*Poetry.*)
- Richard Cœur-de-Lion. RAMON GUTHRIE. (*The Bookman.*)

- Sonnets For A Son. AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL.
(*Voices.*)
- Live Epitaphs. ('*A Poor Woman,*' '*Miser,*' '*Village Belle.*') AMANDA BENJAMIN HALL.
(*Nation.*)
- Old Houses. LENA HALL. (*Voices.*)
- Rachel Laments. MARION ETHEL HAMILTON.
(*Voices.*)
- An East-Side Funeral. DANIEL HENDERSON.
(*Poetry.*)
- Ophelia. ROBERT HERRING. (*The London Mercury.*)
- Wanderers In Shadow. JOHN LEE HIGGINS.
(*Golden Quill.*)
- The Rock Wrestler. FRANK EARNEST HILL.
(*New Republic.*)
- Palms. LEONARD HINTON. (*Palms.*)
- Frieze. PAUL HORGAN. (*Palms.*)
- Widowed. VELMA BYERS HUTCHINSON. (*Poetry.*)
- The Wind Was There. BRAVIG IMBS. (*Transition.*)
- A Wind Goes. BERTHA TEN EYCK JAMES. (*Poetry.*)
- The Judgment Day. (*A Negro Sermon.*) JAMES WELDON JOHNSON. (*Century.*)
- Magula. HELENE JOHNSON. (*Palms.*)
- Unsatisfied. ELEANOR LYNE KING. (*Lyric.*)
- Taos. PHILLIPS KLOSS. (*Overland Monthly & Out West Magazine.*)

- Come Home. ELEANOR C. KOENIG. (*Voices.*)
- Gulls. EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER. (*America.*)
- Tommy And I. RAYMOND KRESENSKY. (*Commonweal.*)
- Footloose And Free. RAYMOND KRESENSKY. (*Voices.*)
- Flame Dancers. A. K. LAING. (*Voices.*)
- The Wind. BORGHILD LUNDBERG LEE.
- Sundown. MAY LEWIS. (*Commonweal.*)
- Time. MAY LEWIS. (*Voices.*)
- A Dragon Laughed. E. R. R. LINKLATER. (*English Review.*)
- Condemned. RODERICK ALLYN LULL. (*Poetry.*)
- The Troubadour. WALTER MADELEY. (*English Review.*)
- Nocturne. JOHN SHERRY MANGAN. (*Commonweal.*)
- Cavalier. ROBERT McBLAIR. (*Poetry.*)
- Gray Goose. VIRGINIA McCORMICK. (*Century Magazine.*)
- Night. MARJORIE MEEKER. (*New Republic.*)
- Disillusion. ELIZABETH EVELYN MOORE. (*Lyric.*)
- Judas Meditates About The Christ. GLADYS OAKS. (*Poetry.*)
- Two Impressions. FRANK O'CONNOR. (*Irish Statesman.*)
- On Moyrus. FRANK O'CONNOR. (*Irish Statesman.*)
- Laughter. TED OLSON. (*Poetry.*)
- Hypothesis. TED OLSON. (*Poetry.*)

- Warfare. HERBERT E. PALMER. (*Irish Statesman.*)
- Death And Change. HERBERT E. PALMER. (*Spectator.*)
- Fiancé. JOSEPHINE VANDOLZEN PEASE. (*The Forge.*)
- At Nine Corners. IDELLA PURNELL. (*The Harp.*)
- There's Alchemy Around The Moon. E. L. PETERSON. (*Palms.*)
- Morning. JOHN CROWE RANSOM.
- Black Madonna. ALBERT RICE. (*Palms.*)
- His Widow. CALE YOUNG RICE. (*Scribner's Magazine.*)
- Loud Cries The Yaffle, Said Jenny Madison. PERCY RIPLEY. (*Saturday Review.*)
- Autobiographical Comment. MARGARET TOD RITTER. (*Commonweal.*)
- Opal. LORETTA ROCHE. (*Interludes.*)
- Boy And Gull. JAMES RORTY. (*Poetry.*)
- Dust. SYDNEY KING RUSSELL. (*Sports & Vanities.*)
- Chant à la Mort. ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE. (*Palms.*)
- Before Marriage. ELIZABETH SANDERSON. (*The American Parade.*)
- Father Escalante Finds The Holy Cross. DOROTHY STOTT SHAW. (*Palms.*)
- Ralph Isham, 1753 And Later. ELI SIEGEL. (*The Minaret.*)

- October Auction. JAY G. SIGMUND. (*The Golden Quill.*)
- Can She Lie Quiet Now. BERENICE VAN SLYKE. (*Palms.*)
- Ragged Robins. BERENICE VAN SLYKE. (*Palms.*)
- Lightly. ART SMITH. (*Poetry.*)
- Five O'Clock. MILDRED W. STILLMAN. (*The Lyric.*)
- Sailor To Siren. CHARLES WHARTON STORK. (*Lyric.*)
- Refuge. H. STUART. (*Poetry.*)
- April. H. STUART. (*Dublin Magazine.*)
- The Hymn Of The Headstone. A. M. SULLIVAN. (*The Harp.*)
- The Man Who Loved Mary. EUNICE TIETJENS. (*Poetry.*)
- Ghosts Of Two Sad Lovers. PAMELA TRAVERS. (*Irish Statesman.*)
- On Ben Bulbain. PAMELA TRAVERS. (*Irish Statesman.*)
- Three Crows. LEO C. TURNER. (*Poetry.*)
- The Death of Satank. STANLEY VESTAL. (*South-west Review.*)
- Beauty Is Made Articulate. EDA LOU WALTON. (*Contemporary Verse.*)
- In Jerusalem, B. C. GILBERT OAKLEY WARD. (*Book of the Rhymers' Club.*)
- The Schoolmistress. MAY WILLIAMS WARD. (*Commonweal.*)

The Walls of Heaven. JOHN FRENCH WILSON.
Pro Sua Vita. ROBERT PENN WARREN. (*New
Republic.*)
Crows. BENNET WEAVER. (*The Midland.*)
Amphoræ. MARY BRENT WHITESIDE. (*Lyric.*)

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